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rated
reviews

**Educational
Software:
Does it
Deliver?**

**Get the Most
From Your
Multimedia Mac:
10 Easy Steps**



**Try Them
Yourself on
*theDisc!***



Leonardo, The Inventor



QMedia 2.0

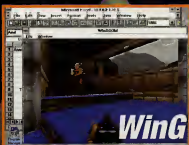


Wiggins in Storyland



Blue Ribbon Photos

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CD-ROM Today



What does CD-ROM educational software really deliver?

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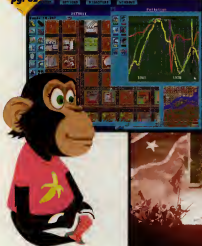
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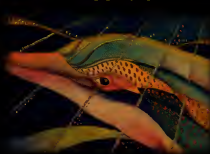
EDUTAINMENT

Wiggins in Storyland, Adventures with OSLO: Tools & Gadgets, and educational shareware: Grammar Expert, American History quiz, Windows sign-language program



WIGGINS IN STORYLAND story writer

ALL KINDS OF RESOURCES



BLUE RIBBON PHOTOGRAPHY

Look for:



On **the Disc!**
Look for this symbol throughout the issue, indicating tie-ins between the magazine and The Disc!

Photos,
fonts,
icons,
sounds,
wallpaper,
BMPs,
and video
clips



As *CD-ROM Today* moves to a monthly publication with our next issue, we're asking for a little feedback and advice from you. Turn the page, and you'll see

our reader survey. It's the first survey we've run, and it's your chance to let us know about you, your hardware, your software interests, and what you like (or don't like) about *CD-ROM Today*. We realize that surveys are a general nuisance to fill out, but we've designed this one to take just a few minutes to complete.

What do you gain from your participation (aside from reinforcing your self-image as a nice person)? A magazine more tailored to your collective needs, and a chance to acquire some new CD-ROM software. Surveys from those responding with a name, address, and telephone number will be eligible for a random drawing. We'll pick five winners, with first-place getting a choice of five CD-ROMs, second-place selecting four discs, and so on down to one for the fifth-place winner. After the drawing at the end of August, we'll contact you and let you take your pick from a list of titles.

Whether or not you're interested in the drawing, please take a few minutes to respond. And if you don't want to tear the page out of this issue, make a photocopy, fill it in, and mail it to the address at the top of the survey.



A number of you have written to tell us how much you appreciate the fact that we rate CD-ROM software in our Reviews section. A couple of comments about this. First, ratings are, of course,

subjective; however, they do reflect our opinion of the relative value of a CD-ROM. Each rating is given carefully, and, in fact, is occasionally modified by the opinion-at-large of our writers and editors who have also spent time exploring the title being reviewed. Every reviewer in *CD-ROM Today* is a veteran writer and software user — in most cases, there's little disagreement among us on the final assessment of a product.

A second point is one you'll find particularly intriguing. Since we started adding ratings to our reviews just four months ago, we've had two software publishers threaten legal action over our reviews. These products received ratings much lower than the publishers felt to be acceptable. In each case, we asked other editors, unaware of the situation, to examine the software to see if, in fact, we were unjustified in our criticism. I'm happy to say that we had unanimous concurrence. While we find it ludicrous that someone could even seriously consider suing over a review (an editorial opinion), it's quite sobering to realize how arduous we, as editors and writers, must be in giving our most fair and honest opinion. We believe our first responsibility is to our readers, and that is our editorial mandate.

Lance Elko
Editorial Director

CD-ROM Today

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1994

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OTHER GAMES MAY TALK. THIS ONE HAS A VOICE.

Star Trek: The Next Generation's

PATRICK STEWART

in

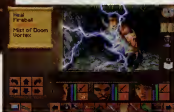
LANDS OF LORE: *The Throne of Chaos*

With Patrick Stewart as the voice of King Richard, *Lands of Lore* has a royal advantage over other fantasy games: An actor of real authority in a role of authority, at the head of a huge cast of heroes and villains who speak, rant and roar their way through the most vocally interactive



adventure yet devised. (A mammoth 130 MB of digitized speech makes it possible.)

The Dark Army is on the move, led by the shape-shifting sorceress Scotia—and each time you meet her she'll be more powerful and terrifying than the last. But your powers can grow, too. Experienced-based character development makes great warriors of those who take arms (in real-time combat) against a sea of indescribable monsters



and makes mighty wizards of those who cast Larger-Than-Life spells. Explore ancient castles, living

forests, hidden lairs, bustling towns, haunted caverns, through 30 enchanted levels made vividly real by more than 20 MB of compressed art and special effects.



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CD-ROM Today

READER SURVEY

We want to hear from you. Tell us what you think about *CD-ROM Today's* editorial coverage — what you'd like to see more of, less of, and how you'd like to see it. And tell us a little about yourself. Your feedback will provide us with valuable information we can use to make *CD-ROM Today* more of what you need.

Mail your completed survey to: *CD-ROM Today* Survey, 300-A S. Westgate Dr., Greensboro, NC 27407; or fax us at (910) 632-1165. Note: If you'd rather not tear this page out of your copy of the magazine, make a photocopy, fill it out, and send that in.

And thanks for your participation!

BONUS!

As our way of saying thanks, we'd like to give you some CD-ROM software. We'll have a drawing for all entries that include name, address, and telephone number (see bottom of page). We'll draw five names. The lucky winner will receive five CD-ROM titles, the second will receive four, the third three, and so on. After the drawing, we'll contact you with a list of titles from which you can make your selection.

1. How do you rate the quality of editorial (content, writing, depth) in *CD-ROM Today*? (Check one)

- ☐ Excellent ☐ Fair
☐ Good ☐ Poor

2. How do you rate the quality of presentation (graphics, design, color)? (Check one)

- ☐ Excellent ☐ Fair
☐ Good ☐ Poor

3. Rank the following in order of interest (1 = greatest interest, 5 = least). As a guide, see the table of contents in this issue.

- Departments
— Features
— Reviews
— Columns
— The Disc! (the CD-ROM)

4. How do you rate the value of The Disc? (Check one)

- ☐ Excellent ☐ Fair
☐ Good ☐ Poor

5. What would like to see more of in the magazine? (Check up to three)

- ☐ Industry news
☐ New products
☐ Hardware features
☐ Multimedia "How To" features
☐ Behind-the-Scenes stories
☐ Troubleshooting articles
☐ Buyer's guides
☐ Entertainment software coverage
☐ Reference software coverage
☐ Educational software coverage
☐ Applications software coverage
Other _____

6. What would like to see more of on The Disc? (Check up to three)

- ☐ Software game demos
☐ Home/Business application demos
☐ Educational demos
☐ Resources and reference
☐ Shareware
☐ Internet information
☐ Electronic books

7. What kind of multimedia system do you use? (Check one)

IBM PC/compatible

- ☐ Pentium
☐ 486
☐ 386

Macintosh

- ☐ Centris
☐ Performa
☐ PowerPC

☐ both PC and Mac systems

Other (please specify) _____

8. How much RAM do you have in your primary multimedia system?

- ☐ 2 MB or less ☐ 8 MB
☐ 4 MB ☐ 16 MB

9. What are the three best CD-ROM titles you've owned or used?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

10. How many CD-ROM titles on average do you buy in a six-month period? _____

11. Do you use an on-line service? If so, check those that apply.

- ☐ America On-Line ☐ Genie
☐ Delphi ☐ Prodigy
☐ CompuServe

12. Do you use the Internet? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. How do you rate the overall quality delivered by multimedia CD-ROM software in mid-1994? (Check one)

- ☐ All you had hoped for
☐ Satisfying
☐ Average
☐ Needs improvement
☐ Greatly disappointing

14. Please check the appropriate box for your age...

- ☐ Under 21 ☐ 51-60
☐ 21-30 ☐ 61-70
☐ 31-40 ☐ 70+
☐ 41-50

15. ...and gender. ☐ Male ☐ Female

16. As a computer user, how would you describe yourself? (Check one)

- ☐ Novice ☐ Advanced
☐ Intermediate ☐ Total Power User

17. Are you a

- ☐ subscriber
☐ newstand purchaser

Comments:

OPTIONAL

(for CD-ROM Software Drawing)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: () _____

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Interactive, championship coaching that
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Ron Fraser, two-time national baseball
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Miami, and U.S. Baseball
Coach in the 1992 Olympic
Games. And Coach Bill Lewis,
UPI's 1991 college football
Coach Of The Year and his
Georgia Tech staff.



Multimedia Way In The Game

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Tam Kite shows you how to lower your score with
championship shot-making, driving and putting
techniques. And major-
college football and
baseball players demon-



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live-action games, scrimmages and
drills. Position-by-position. Skill-by-
skill. With valuable coaching every



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learn at your own
pace. Only ESPN and
IntelliPlay give you a
personal multimedia
coach who's always
ready to help you
build winning
skills. So call 1-800-357-5237
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dealers. And get your head in the game.



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Product Information Number 197

WELCOME to
the DISC!

This third issue of The Disc! is packed with more than 650 megabytes of the very best and latest CD-ROM and multimedia programs.

And as a special bonus, there's a second CD-ROM that lets you sample the multifaceted product line from Interactive

Electronic Publishing.

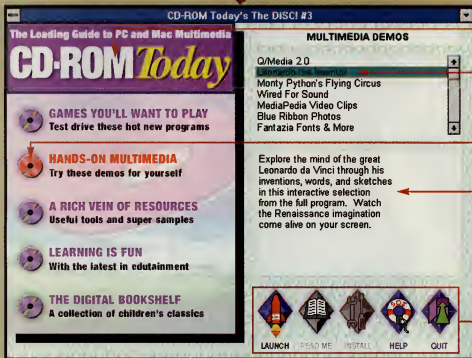
In the next few pages you'll get an overview of what's on The Disc! this month, together with tips on getting started. There are also more "help" files and other documentation on The Disc! itself. Have fun...

Quick Start for PC Users

1. From the Windows' Program Manager, click on File and select Run. In the Run window, select Browse and change the directory designation to your CD-ROM drive (usually D: or E:).
2. Select "install.exe" and click the OK button.
3. This will install The Disc! user interface and place a new icon in a CD-ROM Today program group.
4. Double click on this new Disc! icon to run the CD-ROM. Note: Once installed, the same icon can be used to play future issues of The Disc!

Hardware Requirements for The Disc!

PC version (minimum): IBM/Tandy or 100% compatible; 386SX SVGA (640x480, 256 colors); 4Mb memory; Windows-compatible sound card.



Click on the logo for more Disc! info.

Click on each program to view descriptions.

Click on The Disc! icon to select a section

Each demo or program is briefly described.

ICONS

When highlighted, these icons do the following:

LAUNCH • Click on this icon to launch, or run, each program

READ ME • Select this icon to find out more information

INSTALL • Choose this when setting up or installing a program

HELP • This icon offers basic information about the user interface

QUIT • Clicking on this icon returns you to the standard Windows interface

DOS-only Users: The Disc! is meant to run from Windows. If you're using a PC but not running Windows, portions of The Disc! can still be used from the DOS prompt. As you peruse our Disc! pages, you'll find a variety of demos and programs that can be run from DOS.

Also, please note that the user interface is optimized to run in an SVGA video mode, rather than a VGA or lesser video mode. If you do have VGA rather than SVGA, the interface will still work without problems but won't have the colors and some of the box outlines that are normally part of the system.

Quick Start for Mac Users

1. The Disc! uses the familiar Macintosh desktop to display its contents.
2. Put the disc in your drive, wait for the icon to appear, then click on it.
3. The Mac contents are arranged in a hierarchical folder system.

Special note: Many of the text files on The Disc! are too large to load into TeachText or applications with restricted file sizes, like Claris Works, but any major WP (such as MS Word or Nisus) should load and display them without difficulty.

Hardware Requirements for The Disc!

Mac version (minimum): 256-color Mac LC; System 7; CD-ROM drive; 4Mb memory

If Nothing Works...

We cannot provide technical and customer support for problems you may encounter with the many different programs and demos on The Disc! But, should your copy of The Disc! fail to run at all, with error messages that indicate that your CD-ROM drive cannot read The Disc!, return the disc to the following address for replacement: The Disc! Replacement, CD-ROM Today, P.O. Box 29364, Greensboro, NC 27429. (Do this within the first two weeks after receiving The Disc!). Please indicate what error message you received.

Computer Key



WINDOWS



MS-DOS



MAC

The Disc! is manufactured by Nimbus Information Systems, one of the foremost disc duplicators in America. Before pressing, it is rigorously tested and certified virus-free.

Leonardo, the Inventor



The creative genius of Leonardo da Vinci, one of history's great visionaries, comes to life in InterActive Electronic Publishing's new title, *Leonardo, the Inventor*. Using 3D animations, video, digitized speech, and music, the CD-ROM focuses on da Vinci's wonderful inventions — ideas that were centuries ahead of their time.

Our interactive demo for both Windows and Mac lets you sample several of the sections from the full program. Following an introductory section, the program comes to a main menu screen. From there, you can click on the various buttons to get a taste of the program.

The "Index" button is not active in our demo, but each of the other main sections lets you see at

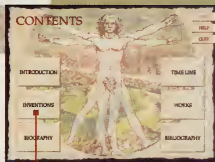
least a page of the section. For example, by clicking on "Biography," you'll see a page from the full bio. The same is true for "Time Line," "List of Works," and "Bibliography." The "Help" button is fully functional.

Please note that the full program is shipped with special 3-D glasses that permit you to see the working models of da Vinci's inventions in a 3-D environment. *Leonardo, the Inventor* is the first title in InterActive Electronic Publishing's new Intelliquist label.

Try This! Click on the "Inventions" button, and you'll be given a selection to choose from. You can click on "Warfare," "Civil Engineering," "Water," or "Flight" and see the introduction to those sections. Then try following the several choices that are active.

For example, click on "Rapid-Fire Crossbow" to find out more about da Vinci's ideas for this unique weapon. Or, select "Bridge Canal" from the "Civil Engineering" section, and follow that path.

How to Run: PC users should click on the "Launch" button from The Disc's main interface, and the program will run straight from here. Be sure your computer's video is set for 256 colors. Mac users should simply click on the program icon in the folder on the desktop.



Explore da Vinci's creative genius along one of several paths.



Our sample from the full program includes narration, music, and animation.



Monty Python's Flying Circus: Secret to Intergalactic Success

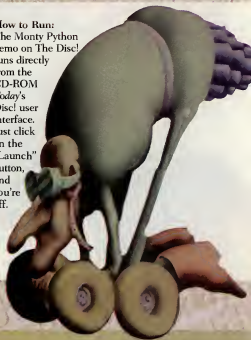
Subtitled as the world's first "interactive CD-ROM Thingle," 7th Level's Monty Python CD-ROM is a semi-deranged interactive comedy that captures all the wit and all the twits that made up the popular British television comedy show.

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the program, the *Secret to Intergalactic Success* contains video footage of various skits, artwork from the show, and an array of rude and wacky noises. And the full program contains a "Desktop Pythonizer" of interactive screen savers, living wallpaper, and application commentaries.

You can read this issue's cover story starting on page 48.

On our Disc! you'll find a short, humorous "trailer" from the program that will give you a taste of the famous Python humor. The trailer is not interactive, but each time you run it, you'll see some minor variations — different characters pop up, phrases change.

How to Run: The Monty Python demo on The Disc! runs directly from the CD-ROM Today's Disc! user interface. Just click on the "Launch" button, and you're off.



A Second Disc: From InterActive Electronic Publishing

We're very pleased to bring you a second CD-ROM in the same package with our own Disc!, thanks to the folks at InterActive Electronic Publishing. InterActive has provided an interactive catalog of its products, including even more information on *Leonardo, the Inventor*. For more information about these products, take a look at the "Leonardo, the Demo" featuring the "Galaxy of Stars" on InterActive's disc that came with your magazine. The products you see are available from software dealers or by calling InterActive's toll-free order number — 1-800-472-8777. InterActive Electronic Publishing Corporation is a subsidiary of Future Vision Holding, Inc.

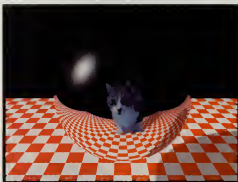
Q/Media 2.0

Q/Media 2.0 allows you to combine animation, sound, video, graphics and text with "drag and drop" simplicity to create your own multimedia presentations. It is a quick and effective toolkit for piecing together interactive learning packages, business applications and sales aids, product demos, or any manner of personal multimedia projects. The version of *Q/Media 2.0* on this issue of *The Disc!* is fully functioning, with the exception of the Save feature, affording you the opportunity to test its ease-of-use for yourself.

Here's a step-by-step walk-through to get you started using *Q/Media* demo file:

Fantazia Fonts & More

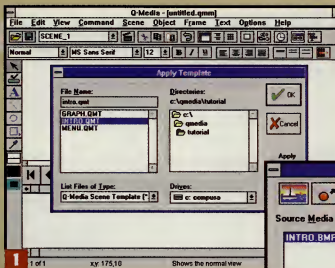
Fantazia Fonts has provided yet more resources to extend and customize your Windows' environment. The sample included on *The Disc!* contains only a small portion of the 3000 fonts, 5000 icons, 250



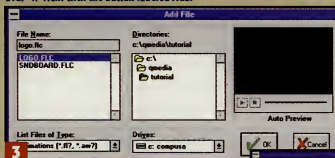
audio .WAV files and 900 color bitmaps, you'll find on their new *Font Elegance* CD-ROM. The example fonts, art, and sound files are contained within their own directories under in the *Fantazia* sub-directory. From there, you



can examine, install and use any of them with your usual Windows utilities.



STEP 3: Now click on the Clip List button (fig. 2).
STEP 4: Next click the button labeled Add.



STEP 6: Click and drag each of these three files into the scene (fig. 4).

Note: The five buttons across the top of the Clip List dialogue box control what type of file names are displayed in the Source Media window (again, fig. 4).

STEP 7: Close the Clip List dialogue box and then center the LOGO.FLC file in the bottom frame and the VIDEO.AVI file in the upper frame.

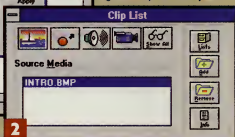


*The quick brown fox jumped
The quick brown fox jumped
The quick brown fox jumped
THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPED*

STEP 1: Click on the File menu and select Apply Template.

STEP 2: Once the dialogue box opens, select **INTRO.QMT**, found in the tutorial sub-directory (fig. 1).

Note: This will open a pre-designed backdrop for your presentation. Later, you will find it more interesting to create your own template.



STEP 5: Select LOGO.FLC, INTRO.WAV and VIDEO.AVI and then click OK (fig. 3).

Note: The List Files of Type window indicates what type of file will show up in the File Name window. To select all three files at once, choose All Files (*.*) in the List Files of Type window and then select each file while pressing the control button on your keyboard.



STEP 8: Activate the Timeline dialogue box by clicking the button on the tool bar that looks like a clock (fig. 5). The timeline will enable you to manipulate the order in which the media play.

STEP 9: Once the files are in place and you have selected the order by which they are executed you can press the button on the right side of the toolbar, with the small projector icon, to view your creation!

This just shows you the simplest functions; there are, of course, many more sophisticated tools for you to use within *Q/Media's* box of multimedia tricks: over 20 transitional devices and special effects, pattern and color selection, grouping, layering, sizing, and gradient options. And it comes with its own integrated text outlining, formatting, and drawing tools.

Wired for Sound Pro 3.0 Limited Edition

Much of the fun in multimedia computing is in the bells and whistles of audio and video, and this limited edition of Aristosoft's popular *Wired for Sound Pro 3.0* utility offers plenty of examples.

The special edition on CD-ROM *Today's Disc!* has five complete working programs that give you a feel for what you can do with sound and images on the PC. There are floppy-disk and CD-ROM versions of the complete *Wired for Sound* that offer hundreds of additional sounds, images,



Customize your Windows wallpaper with our Wired for Sound Limited Edition.

The ImagiNation Network

There are many online services springing up, but only one of them is completely dedicated to presenting a full array of interactive entertainment and gaming—and that's The ImagiNation Network.

Once you log onto the network, you'll find fun and games ranging from an arcade-style amusement park to fantasy role-playing games, classic card and board games, and even an adults-only (password protected) electronic casino. There are also conferences, chat rooms, bulletin boards, a shopping mall, electronic mail, and clubs. And on many of the games, you can play with people thousands of miles away.

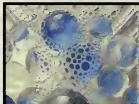
On The Disc!, you'll find The ImagiNation's installation and sign-up program, allowing you—via your computer and modem—to log onto the network.

Try It Out: With The ImagiNation Network, you create your own persona by using the program's FaceMaker to create a visual image of yourself. That's what others will see when communicating with you. It's a lot of fun, and your first step into a network of games.

How to Run: The ImagiNation Network is DOS-based, so you'll need to leave the CD-ROM

and videos, plus over a dozen more programs.

The five applications include Talking Clock with Face, a multimedia utility that puts a face on the screen that will announce time, date, and scheduled appointments; Wallpaper Changer, which lets you create your own computer desktop effects with wallpaper backgrounds that change at intervals of your choice and feature nine special effects; Sound Hook, an audio utility that includes .WAV files with which you can personalize your Windows events; Icon Changer, which permits you to choose from 40 different icons to replace an application's default icon; and Cursor Changer, which includes 20 cursors with which to replace the eight default cursor types.



The program offers panoramic views as well as close up shots.

A user manual is accessible from the program to help you learn to customize your multimedia system with these programs.

How to run: Click on the INSTALL button on The Disc!'s interface and follow directions. A Setup program runs and installs about two megabytes of data on your hard drive. Note: This utility does make a change to Windows\WIN.INI file if you use it. The program must run from Windows. But it does have a nice UNINSTALL option when you want to remove it from your system.



Create your own online persona with The ImagiNation Network's FaceMaker program.

Today user interface and quit Windows. From your CD-ROM drive's prompt (usually D: or E:), type *cd imagin* to change to The ImagiNation sub-directory. From there, type *fun* to start the installation process. You'll find good online instructions throughout.

Please note, your computer must be equipped with a modem and connected to an outside phone line before you begin. If you're unfamiliar with going online and with modems, talk to your local computer dealer about how to get started.

Blue Ribbon Photos

Blue Ribbon presents the work of several outstanding photographers—Barbara Sansome, Claudio Moure, and Lee Hinton—in a series of CD-ROMs, each containing 100 royalty-free images in the Kodak Photo CD format. The samples on The Disc! are drawn from the first four CD-ROMs in this outstanding series (see review on p.103).



In order to view the beautiful images contained in the \photos sub-directory you require a viewer, such as Paint Shop Pro (also to be found on The Disc!), that is capable of displaying pictures in the Kodak Photo CD format.

Sam & Max Hit the Road

US Sam & Max are, respectively, a largish dog detective in a blue suit and a "hyperkinetic rabbit thing," who happen to be freelance police. Protecting innocent people from the bad guys is a dirty business, especially for a dog and a rabbit with an antisocial attitude and a penchant for violence. But, hey, they like it.

The original full game from LucasArts on floppy disk was a big success, and now a new CD-ROM "talkie" has been released with much more digitized speech.



Click on anything and everything – you'll be in for some surprises.

Our interactive demo on The Disc! will give you a good idea of the offbeat humor, great voices, and game play of the full versions. The demo includes their office, a hallway, and the street in front of their office. There's plenty to do and see here.

Interacting with characters and items in the game is easy, thanks to LucasArts' pop-up icons: a "Looking" eyeball, a "Pick-up-item" open/closed hand, a "Telling" open/closed mouth, a "Use/Can't use" closed/open hand squeezing a doll, "Walking" fingers, an open "Inventory" box, and a special "Use Max" head image. The "Use Max" icon allows Sam to get help from Max at certain points



Even transitional scenes such as this one are packed with amusing details.

in the game. With the Max-head cursor, click on any object that you think needs Max's help.

You cycle through these choices by clicking the right mouse button. When you move any of the icons around the screen, they will animate when they hit a hot spot. For example, move the closed-eyeball icon over the TV set in Sam's and Max's office, and it opens. Click the left mouse button to see what happens.

Try This: In the main office, use the eyeball to look at the dart board, the mouse hole, and the television. Try turning on the television, then touch the TV's rabbit ears. See if Sam & Max have a phone message. Walk out into the hallway and then down the stairs. On the street, talk to the cat. "Look" at the cat over and over again. "Use"

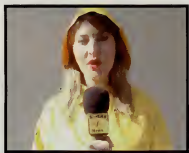
you can do just about everything else. The demo has a 10-minute limit, so you'll have to work fast as the new city manager! To quit the game, go to the File menu, and select Exit or simply press Control-X.

Try This: Sea_Land has some real problems, especially traffic. It's overcrowded, and you're going to have to use the bulldozer to knock down some areas that have high crime and too much traffic. Check your budget because you don't have very much time; you might try to spend your way to a better city.

How to Run: The SimCity CD limited-edition version is on The Disc! in a subdirectory called *simcity*. Drop to DOS, switch to that directory, and then type *simcity*. The demo will start. Be aware that if you don't get any sound and speech from your system, it may well be because your sound configuration is not 100% compatible Sound Blaster. The demo doesn't include a sound board configuration option, but you'll still be able to play the

demo. (The full program, of course, does allow you to configure sound.)

Also, if the videos in the game appear to be jumbled into three or four fragments, quit the demo and run the "unives.exe" file in the *simcity* subdirectory. This is a video driver that will correct the problem.



Sim City-CD is enhanced by videos of characters who interact with your design plans.

Max on the cat. And make sure you have the duo stop in at Bosco's Guns, Liquors, and Baby Needs.

How to Run: As with most PC games, our demos on this issue of The Disc! need to run from DOS. To run Sam & Max, choose Quit from the CD-ROM Today user interface, and then quit Windows in the usual way to return to DOS. From the DOS prompt of your CD-ROM drive (usually D: or E:), type the following: `cd sam_max`,



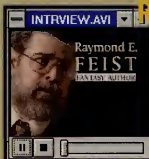
Try entering the store in the background – and see what happens.

which takes you to the Sam & Max subdirectory. From that subdirectory, type *playdemo* to start the demo. You will also have an opportunity to configure the demo for your sound card.

To quit the demo, press the Alt key and the X key at the same time. This will take you to a selection screen from which you can exit the demo.



Your progress as a city builder can be monitored from several perspectives via the multi-windowed interface.



The interview with Raymond Feist is one of the "extras" found on the CD-ROM version of *Betrayer* at Krondor.

Raymond Feist Interview

On The Disc!, we have an interview with fantasy writer Raymond Feist, whose books are internationally popular. He talks about his work and his relationship to Dynamix game, *Betrayer* at Krondor. This monologue is contained on the complete CD-ROM version of the game.

How to Run: Simply click on the "Launch" button from our Windows user interface, and Feist's video will run.

Games — It's a **DS** World

(but not for long!)

Some readers have commented that almost all of the game demos included on The Disc! must be run from DOS, not Windows or our user interface. Why can't you just click on a "Launch" or "Install" button from Windows and start playing? That's because most games take up so much active memory that they can't tolerate having Windows crowding out even a small amount. Game developers are well aware of that, and Microsoft's "Chicago" will — when it arrives — take care of the problem. But, for now, most of the best games you'll see have to load from DOS — and our demos do, too.

In the meantime, we're working on a DOS interface that is intuitive and takes the guess work and frustration away. Look for it on an upcoming Disc!. Meanwhile, here's a quick-start for each of the game demos on this Disc!. See the individual demo descriptions for more details.

Sam & Max

From your CD-ROM drive's DOS prompt,
Type: `cd sam_max`
Then, from `sam_max` subdirectory prompt,
Type: `playdemo` to run the program

SimCity CD

From your CD-ROM drive's DOS prompt,
Type: `cd simcity`
Then, from `simcity` subdirectory prompt,
Type: `simcity` to run the program

Corridor 7

From your CD-ROM drive's DOS prompt,
Type: `cd c7demo`
Then, from `c7demo` subdirectory prompt,
Type: `install x` (`x` = the hard drive where you want the demo installed, usually either `c` or `d`) [Note there is a colon (`:`) used here]
Then, from `c7demo` subdirectory that's been installed to your hard drive,
Type: `corr7` to run the program

Front-Page Sports: Baseball

From your CD-ROM drive's DOS prompt,
Type: `cd baseball`
Then, from `baseball` subdirectory prompt,
Type: `install x` (`x` = the hard drive where you want the demo installed, usually either `c` or `d`) [Note there is a colon (`:`) used here]
The install program creates two subdirectories on your hard drive called `[dynamic]baseball\`.
From that directory's prompt,
Type: `playball` to run the program
(Type: `playball -sb` for Sound Blaster support)

Pinball Fantasies

From your CD-ROM drive's DOS prompt,
Type: `cd pinball`
Then, from the `pinball` subdirectory,
Type: `install x` (`x` = the hard drive where you want the demo installed, usually either `c` or `d`)
[Note there is NO colon after `x`]
Then, follow the on-screen directions to start the game.

Corridor 7

DS For those who are familiar with Id Software's Wolfenstein 3D and Doom!, you know that they're state-of-the-art fast-action games. Now, Capstone has licensed the Wolfenstein 3D game engine to bring you Corridor 7 — a blast-'em-and-move action



Corridor 7 is packed with all the shoot 'em up action that fans of Wolfenstein and Doom have come to expect.

game with 30 levels of mayhem.

On our Disc!, you'll find one complete level of this new game. You're in the first-person role of a futuristic soldier who's been sent to search out and destroy some nasty alien life forms that have

Front Page Sports: Baseball

DS The Front Page Sports series from Dynamix forges ahead! First, there were the very successful Football and Football Pro games, and now there's Baseball. Great graphics, realistic play, and authentic versions of major league stadiums.



Play ball!... in accurate representations of some of the big league stadiums.

The demo you'll find on our Disc! lets you bat for half an inning, then gives you a glimpse of some of the major-league stadiums, and finally presents more details about the full version. You can come back over and over to practice your batting.

Try This: Press the F1 function key to access online help as you play the demo. And try out the other function keys to see a variety of options that are in the full game. Remember, you've got half an inning. If you're good, you can stay at bat all day!

How to Run: Use the install program as described elsewhere on this page. When the program runs, go to QuickStart on the Main menu to start batting!

taken over a research facility.

Try This: As you go forward, look for new weapons, health kits, and more ammo. Just move over them, and they're yours.

Here are a few keyboard commands for the game:

Movement — Use cursor keys

To slide — Alt key

Fire weapon — Ctrl key

Open doors — Space bar

Toggle visor settings — Enter key

Drop a mine — M key

Activate map — Tab key

Toggle score on/off — S key

Activate control panel — Esc key

Pause game — Pause key

How to Run: See the instructions for installation on this page. Note that Corridor 7 uses a good deal of memory to run. If you get a message saying that there isn't enough XMS memory, reboot your computer and try again.

Pinball Fantasies

DS This is one of the best pinball games we've ever seen — realistic, fast, and fun. It's a floppy disk product, but 21st Century Entertainment is preparing a CD-ROM version with eight different pinball tables, plenty of digitized sounds, and a complete multimedia history of pinball. Look for more details on the CD-ROM version in an upcoming issue — and we'll have something special on The Disc! for you as well.

On this Disc!, you'll find the Playland pinball table, with a 10-minute play limit. Play as many balls as you can in 10 minutes, then you'll have to start over again. To play the game, use the Down arrow key to depress the ball plunger, then release. Flippers are controlled by the left and right Shift, Ctrl, or Alt keys. Press the Space bar to nudge the machine. The P key pauses the game. The F5 function key gives you more options.

Try This:

Lighting up the P-U-K-E letters across the top earns you a big bonus!

How to Run:

Follow the install program as described on this page.

Note that if your system locks up when you try to run the game, we've found that it's almost always a conflict with a sound card. Try different settings from the sound menu during installation if you have problems.



Score bonus points by lighting up the letters P-U-K-E at the top of the screen!

The Cruncher



A spreadsheet that's fun! Isn't that a contradiction in terms? Well, wait until you've run a few numbers through Davidson's *The Cruncher*, an easy-to-learn, easy-to-use spreadsheet (for ages 10 and up) that includes animated characters, speech, music, and even sound effects. Amusing tutorials provide a clear overview of the tools available and show how to use them with real world examples like family budgeting, planning a party, and tracking baseball stats.

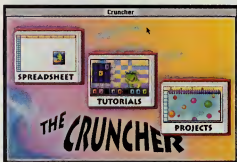


Colorful and amusing characters lead you step-by-step through essential spreadsheet operations.

Taking clear aim at educating young people in basic spreadsheet skills and the fundamentals of "what if" number crunching, this is an amusing and effective program for the computer novice of any age. *The Cruncher* is one of Davidson's "Power Tools" applications.

Try This: There are three introductory tutorials in our demo on *The Disc!*, featuring money made from candy sales, how to make cookies, and buying a pet. They're interactive and feature sounds and animation as well.

How to Run: Just click on the "Install" icon, and follow the directions. You'll receive information on system and installation requirements.



The demo of *The Cruncher* allows you to work through three of its introductory tutorials.

Ascend

Although Franklin Quest's award-winning *Ascend* has received accolades in the PIM (personal information manager) category, it actually does a lot more than most scheduling and contact management software. Based on a fundamental philosophy of time management, inspired by Benjamin Franklin himself, *Ascend* is a thorough-going personal organizer.

When used conscientiously, *Ascend* takes a "top-down" approach to help organize your life. The process begins with defining your most basic values, those ultimate goals that are most important to you. These can then be broken down into long-range, intermediate, and prioritized daily tasks — each of which contribute to actualizing the full potential of what is your want to achieve.

The various task lists cross-link with all the other standard PIM features: calendars, to-do



The Multimedia Workshop

Davidson & Associates has published this introduction to the creation of multimedia on the Mac — a "Power Tools" title that features a writing workshop with desktop publishing capabilities, a video workshop for the creation of "movies," and a paint workshop that helps you create original art work. There is also a number of multimedia libraries

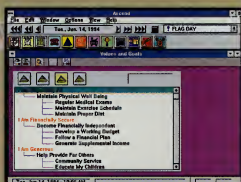


from which to pull material for your creations. The program is aimed at ages 10 and older.

Our demo on *The Disc!* includes each of the workshops, but the Save function has been disabled.

Try This: Use the desktop publishing features of the Writing Workshop to create or edit a few documents. Try writing a story, a letter, or a newsletter message. Then move to the Paint Workshop to experiment with the painting and drawing tools. Finally, go to the Video Workshop to select a background, a video clip, or some pictures that might accompany your story. The program is intuitive and menu-based, so have fun experimenting.

How to Run: Click on each of the different "Workshop" icons, either 8-bit or 16-bit, to call them up and begin your work.



Ascend not only provides all the necessary PIM tools, but a fundamental approach to organizing your time and priorities.

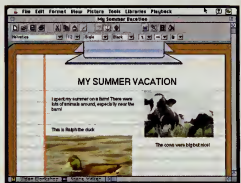
reminders, address books, and so on. Add to this a daily journal, favorite quotations, item locator files, and a red tab section for miscellaneous information and you have an exceptional tool for keeping track of your time, and your life on track. And *Ascend* software works hand in glove with the full range of Franklin's "hard copy" planners.

Try This: Our *Disc!* includes both Windows and Mac full working copies of *Ascend*, but they're limited to 60-days use after installation. At that point, they're automatically disabled. For further information about the complete package, call Franklin Quest at (800) 877-1814.

How to Run: PC users simply click on the "Install" button from our user interface and follow the on-screen direction. The PC version on our *Disc!* contains a complete mini-manual for using *Ascend* as a Write file. Mac users open the *Ascend* folder and click on the program to begin using it.



Your most important goals can be realized by breaking them down into daily tasks and scheduling them in the time management module.



Multimedia Workshop empowers you to create your own presentations, complete with graphics, videos, text, sound and special effects.

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5RRD9

Adventures with OSLO: Tools & Gadgets

Meet OSLO, a robotic science teacher for children five years and older. OSLO contains five interactive science-learning segments in this CD-ROM-based package, including an animated storybook, an interactive database, an adventure game, a series of maze puzzles, and a coloring gallery with musical markers.

Science for Kids, a publisher of multimedia educational titles for schools, is launching *Adventures with OSLO* as its first consumer title for both Mac and Windows.



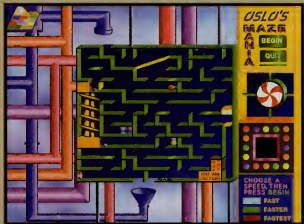
OSLO's colorful interface always keeps an eye on your cursor movements.

Our interactive demo presents you with partially completed segments of the full program, and there's plenty to do.

Try This: OSLO's user interface offers a variety of activities, each represented by an icon that looks like that activity itself. For example, to create an original drawing, click on the crayon in one of OSLO's two right hands. Or click on the book in OSLO's other right-hand to launch the interactive story; this gives the user two ways of experiencing the story. The user can click on the

ear button to hear the story via a narrator, or click on the character button to see the story come to life through animation.

For more action and lots of sound effects, the green maze icon starts a fast paced game in which the child must direct a ball through a vertically oriented maze in an effort to use all of the



This maze is only one of the amusing activities which incorporates learning about tools and machines.

simple machines on the screen. No matter what tool you choose you'll notice that OSLO keeps a close eye on your mouse! Overall, the demo does a good job of explaining what's active and how each segment works.

How to Run: No setup or installation is required to run *Adventures with OSLO*. PC users simply click on the Launch button on the CD-ROM Today's interface then click OSLO's power button. Please note that your display adapter must be set for 256 colors at 640x480 resolution for the demo to work properly. Mac users open the folder on the desktop, and then click on the program icon.

(from the circus to the Old West to outer space). But there's a good deal here for a child to try.

Try This: If you've started your story only to encounter king-sized writer's block, click on the light-bolt icon. The program then suggests ideas



Wiggins in Storyland will bring out the budding author in any youngster.

for an object over which a magic wand cursor is waved. Or if your plot needs even more of a shake-up, click on the jack-in-the-box icon for a real surprise. Some wildly whimsical event — such as a stampede by a herd of dog dishes — takes place in your picture. Then all you have to do is



Wiggins uses a series of bold and cheerful icons along the top of the screen.

write it up!

How to Run: *Wiggins* runs straight from our user interface. Click on the Launch button, and you're off. The main screen gives you information about what's active in the demo. After leaving the main screen, you see the menu bar along the top of the book.



If you get stuck, *Wiggins* has a number of tricks up its sleeve to 'unblock' the novice writer.

Wiggins in Storyland

Media Vision's *Wiggins in Storyland* (reviewed in this issue on page 99), is a delightful story-creation program designed for children.

Although the educational game also includes an activities room, our demo on the Disc! includes just the story-writing section of the full program, and you're limited to fantasy characters and backgrounds instead of the complete range of themes



Media-Pedia Video Clips

If you produce multimedia presentations, whether professionally or simply for personal use and pleasure, you'll want to take a look at this video montage from Media-Pedia. It is just a short sample of their first CD-ROM collection of over 150 outstanding film clips. They have shots of everyone from Hitler to JFK to Edison to Einstein; and places like Ellis Island, Southern California and even Mount Rushmore; covering every era from the turn of the century to the space age. Purchase of the original disc gives you royalty-free usage of these outstanding visual resources.

How to Run: The Media-Pedia montage is a single .AVI file, optimized for double-spin drives, that launches straight from The Disc's user interface.

How God Makes God

With creative use of animated line drawings and balloon text, this demo version of Peter Small's program takes an interesting look at the laws of probability. To help illustrate these laws, Small discusses how they apply to the game of roulette. After each lesson you are given a chance to try them out for yourself, without risking any money of course!



How God Makes God uses a game of roulette to illustrate the laws of chance and probability.

How to Run: Simply click on the icon in the Disc! folder and off you go.

Note: After running the demo you might need to reset your screen from black and white to color in the Monitor section of your Control Panel.



The program makes effective use of (often animated) vintage black-and-white illustrations.

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SOUNDING BOARD

Question or Comment?

Write: Sounding Board, CD-ROM Today,
P.O. Box 29364, Greensboro, NC 27429
Fax: (910) 632-1165
Online: cdromtoday@aol.com

MacSure

I'm afraid a small chuckle escaped my lips as I read Tom R. Halfhill's column on "Plug and Play" [June/July]. I recently helped a friend install a CD-ROM drive in her PC. After about three hours, we were up and running, only to find the actual CD even harder to install! She asked me how I ever got mine to work. I smiled, seeing more clearly than before why I owned a Macintosh. Macs have been "Plug and Play" ever since they were introduced ten years ago!

Ken Dunstone

Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary

Tom actually mentioned this in his column, but it was edited out at the last moment for space reasons.

I just finished reading your "10 Steps to Troubleshooting Your Multimedia PC" article [June/July]. In the "Common CD-ROM Solutions" section you neglected to mention the easiest way to avoid all this trouble: Buy a Macintosh.

Michael Edwards
via AOL (using Mac 2.01)

Yea, verily, Mac owners are blessed, but can still sometimes run into their own set of problems. See "10 Steps to Troubleshooting Your Multimedia Macintosh" in this issue.

Ratings Fixed: Good!

Glad to know the same-look discs in your ratings were a glitch. I've seen too many magazines where the graphic design has interfered with readability. Your magazine strikes a good balance between readability and catching the eye...it's the only one of the CD-ROM/multimedia magazines I look for on the newsstand and buy without checking the contents first.

Ron HL
via AOL

Yin and Yang

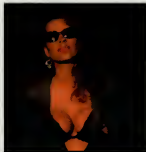
I was so disappointed with your prominent coverage of sex on CD's [June/July]. I know that your lead said, "Like it or not...", but I thought the article was in such poor taste. I know that pornographic movies exist also, but I wouldn't expect a full review of them in any popular magazines or newspapers. The inclusion of such a base topic for review makes me question your ability to review any CD-ROM. Cancel my subscription.

Mousie2
via AOL

Kudos for an intelligent article on a topic multimedia mags have ignored — sex on CD-ROM. For better or worse, sex CDs are a HUGE part of the industry, and to ignore them is NOT truly covering the industry. You've displayed the chutzpah to cover a racy but ever-present fact of the multimedia biz that others have chosen to ignore. I'm certain you'll receive a few "nasty-grams," but it's impossible to pretend to cover CD-ROMdom without acknowledging this dark but booming aspect.

Charlie Flint
via AOL

Sex on
CD-ROM:
We knew it
would be a
hot potato....



...and Other Comments

I agree with Randy Chase's article on "Sex on CD-ROM" and also with Anne Gregor's sidebar ("An Observation on Gender"). As a 15-year-old male, I hate how the media has put such an emphasis on adult XXX CD-ROMs. I'm glad that finally somebody shared their views on pornography in what is a relatively new media.

Joshua Shagam
via AOL

I was disappointed when your CD-ROM had no demos for your feature "Sex on CD-ROM." Are there demos coming next month?

Ruben Franco
South El Monte, California

Some readers thought that the PlanIt demo, featuring swimsuit models, from that issue was too racy (though not at all connected with the feature you refer to).

We wanted to report on the sex/tech issue since it's a huge part of the CD-ROM software business, but that's all we're doing with the subject for the foreseeable future. We're not interested in porn for porn's sake, so...nothing on The Disc!

It's a pleasure to find a magazine as refreshing as yours: honest, willing to admit mistakes, thorough. And subtly humorous? You bet: the juxtaposition of the title "Sex on CD-ROM" and the author's name, Randy Chase. Very clever.

Steve Brickman
via AOL

You did mention "honest." And we were. A real writer, his real name. We'd like to think we're occasionally clever, but this was a case of pure serendipity.

PC Tips

The otherwise excellent article by Charles Brannon in your June/July issue ["10 Steps to Troubleshooting Your Multimedia PC"] is marred by a serious omission. He failed to caution the apparent target of the article, the inexperienced repair person, to never, ever plug or unplug a board or external peripheral from a PC whose power supply has not been switched off. Worse yet, at one point he advises "Exit Windows, plug it (the mouse) in and restart Windows" — plugging or unplugging a mouse from a live serial port will inevitably fry an interface chip.

A lesser quibble: Turning the computer off then on — in lieu of using CTRL-ALT-Del — is necessary only if your PC does not have a hardware Reset switch, a preferable alternative for a cold boot.

J. F. Smith
Warminster, Pennsylvania

Charles responds: Mr. Smith's precautions are laudable. Perhaps it was too obvious to mention that you don't work on your computer while it's

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Product Information Number 142

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SOUNDING BOARD

turned on. I've never fried a serial port while attaching cables, but it doesn't hurt to be careful. In fact, if you don't discharge static before touching the connector, you can burn out the port even if the power is turned off. Finally, cycling the power will initialize your hardware more completely than pressing the Reset button, but it does cause more wear and tear on the power supply.

I read with great interest Charles Brannon's multimedia troubleshooting feature. I have another suggestion for working around "out of memory" messages.

My company publishes Chestnut CD-ROMs, and we're often called by users who get these messages. Most of the time this problem is solved by installing SHARE. Exit Windows, get a DOS C> prompt, and simply type SHARE. If you do not have a path set to your DOS directory, type "C:\DOS\SHARE <enter>".

Also, you can add the following line to your AUTOEXEC.BAT file: "LH C:\DOS\SHARE.EXE". I hope this helps.

Karen L. Uminski
CDRP, Inc.
via the Internet

We appreciate the tip, Karen. Thanks.

Capable vs. Compatible

I am writing regarding Tom Benford's article "Double Speed CD-ROM Drives" in the April/May issue. A footnote at the bottom of the article indicated that all of the drives listed in summary table were "multisession Photo CD compatible." We believe that this statement is misleading.

While it may be technically correct that the drives are multisession "capable," Kodak does not consider a drive to be fully Photo CD "compatible" until the drive has been thoroughly tested against a test suite which includes ten different variations of multisession Photo CD discs. The drive's ability to correctly install Kodak's Access software (which allows the user to view Photo CDs on a CD-ROM drive) is also tested.

A trademark licensing program has been in place for some time now which provides a mechanism for each drive manufacturer (or OEM) to have each of its drive models certified by Kodak as Photo CD compatible. The program has been highly successful and all major CD-ROM drive manufacturers and OEMs presently participate in the program.

Your article may mislead the reader to believe that all of the drives on your list have

been certified by Kodak as being Photo CD compatible. We have reviewed the list and found the following drive models have not yet been certified by Kodak as being Photo CD compatible.

Hitachi CDR1900S, CDR1950S,
CDR6700, and CDR6750
MediaVision Reno
Procom ICD-MX, MacCD/MX,
SiCD-DS, and MCD-DS
Sony CDU7811 and CDU-561

Daniel Keefe
Eastman Kodak Company

♦ ♦ ♦

We Are the Eggmen

On page 26 of your June/July issue, you ran a news item on Compton's *Imagine* CD-ROM. Your caption noted, "He is the Walrus: Lennon on CD-ROM." I'd like to clarify an important point. The Walrus was Paul. Although John sang the actual song, there are three points to prove John wasn't the Walrus.

1. John was the Rooster. You can tell because the Rooster is wearing glasses, which was a trademark of John and only John.

2. The first lines of the song, "I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together," suggests that John is portraying the Walrus as himself by metaphor only, and in fact is saying that either everyone or nobody (I am he as you are he) is the Walrus, except for, of course, the actual Walrus.

3. In the song "Glass Onion" (White Album, 1969), one stanza tells the actual identity of the Walrus: "Here's a little clue for you all, the Walrus was Paul."

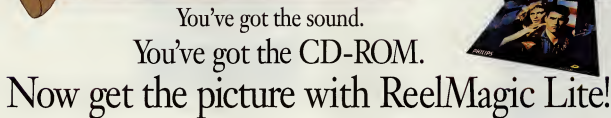
Please research even these tiny details for use in captions, especially those about the Beatles. That little caption probably pathetically destroyed the faith of a few other die-hard Beatles' fans as well. Not that it's going to make me give up on your otherwise spectacular magazine, of course!

Joshua Shagam
via AOL

Good points again, Josh, but count us as *Fab Four* fans as well. We're of the "Lennon as Walrus" school, however. If you listen to Lennon's song "God" from the post-Beatles "John Lennon and The Plastic Ono Band" 1970 album, you'll hear John's last word on the subject: "I was the walrus." (Also, the White Album was '68.)

Our apologies go to those readers expecting some serious discussion of a multimedia issue in this space.

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Product Information Number 133

NEWSLINE

S In Brief... SOFTWARE

Tsartiste

Few of us have ever had the chance to peruse Mother Russia's art treasures. Now, Cascade Marketing International, in cooperation with IV Intersoft of Moscow, is showcasing Russia's



This painting ("Red Room") is one of 37 Matisse works found inside St. Petersburg's Hermitage, and found on Cascade's RUSA.

riches (including works by Rembrandt, Matisse, Rodin, etc.) in a multi-volume CD-ROM series titled RUSA. The first 5 discs, programmed by members of the Russian Academy of Sciences, focus on the State Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg. The introductory DOS CD-ROM (which can run under Windows) sells for \$79.95 and can be ordered directly from Cascade at (509) 663-9523.

Talkin' Health Care Blues

Health Care (who's gonna get it/who's gonna pay for it) is currently one of the largest social issues in the U.S. Before your next heated discussion of the subject, make sure you've got all the facts. I-Mode's *The National Health Care Debate* combines virtually every piece of proposed health care legislation on one CD-ROM (DOS, Windows; \$79.95) as well as more than 2,500 public policy abstracts. Don't look for multimedia bells and whistles — this is a text-only affair. I-Mode Publications...(800) 370-6717.

CD-ROM: The Shopping Trip

Once upon a time, it was all so simple. The traveling peddler wheeled his wares door-to-door. You stayed put and he brought the products to you. The original home shopping worked like a charm.

Nowadays, however, life isn't nearly so uncomplicated. We not only have a huge selection of merchandise available, but we're also flooded with options about where we buy what we buy.

And there will be more of these options. In their efforts to create a multimedia feeding frenzy, marketers are experimenting with a variety of retail formats. Everyone smells big bucks in multimedia. It's just a matter of who gets them first.

The Little Shop Down the Street

Since the dawn of recorded time, software shops have been found in shopping centers. Most malls contain at least one such store — the gargantuan Mall America (Minneapolis, MN) had four

software stores at last count.

The demographics make sense. Malls attract families, including primary breadwinners (who can afford software). On the other hand,



Store: Incredible Universe
Size: Industrial-Size
CD-ROMs Available: 300

mall-based software shops are often cramped for shelf space and title selection. Finding unique software that isn't already hugely successful can be a daunting experience for the consumer.

Enter the Giants

At the other end of the size scale are the behemoths. Huge stores like Incredible Universe, now being tested in four cities, work hard to offer everything suggested by their

name. The physical dimensions are impressive, the largest occupying 180,000 square feet. That's one entire length of a football field by two full football fields laid end-to-end.

Then again, it must house some 85,000 products. Subtracting the consumer appliances, you're still left with more than 1,200 software titles, 340 video-game titles, and 48 different models of computers. Whew...

And, should the shopping family need sustenance, they can always repair to the Incredible Universe restaurant. Kids growing restless shuffling from aisle to aisle? Fine, send them off to the children's play area.

The operating principle is called "destination retailing," whereby shopping is made extra-pleasant — even fun. The longer you entertain consumers (by feeding and amusing them) the longer they'll spend considering your vast selection of merchandise.

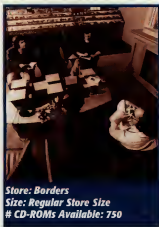
THE GANG'S ALL HERE

"Saturday Night Live" is about to kick off its 20th season. After two decades of entertaining (and/or offending) viewers, the show has endured as a television mainstay. In October, GameTek will celebrate this milestone by releasing a two CD-ROM retrospective: The "Saturday Night Live" 20th Anniversary CD-ROM Set (Windows, Mac; \$79.95). Users will navigate an interface modeled on the show's Rockefeller Center studio.

Clicking on different parts of the stage will call up various skits and attractions (for instance, The Coneheads, Wayne's World, etc.). Other elements include musical parodies from the show, passages from actual SNL scripts, performances by The Blues Brothers, and a photo scrapbook. GameTek...(305) 935-3995.



The Not Ready for CD-ROM Players, in their second incarnation



Store: Borders
Size: Regular Store Size
CD-ROMs Available: 750

Incredible Universe isn't the first experiment in destination retailing. A chain of more than 20 stores called Borders has toyed with similar strategies for more than 20 years. Borders stores actually began as bookshops, but as their numbers grew, so did their willingness to expand their venues. Borders stores now routinely contain a book shop, a music shop, and even an espresso bar.

The atmosphere Borders aims for differs from the family carnival feel of an Incredible Universe. Borders is more intimate (about 1/6th the size of an Incredible Universe) and stresses its coziness with carpeted floors and wood-paneled walls. The mood is also more discriminating, targeting a sophisticated, up-scale clientele.

The \$60 Million Downside

Just as a superstore like Incredible Universe offers more, it must also sell proportionately more. Each Incredible Universe location, which employs a staff of 300, has its quota — receipts in the neighborhood of \$60 million per annum to turn a profit.

Fortunately, both Incredible Universe and Borders are owned by heavyweights unfazed by the threat of steep downsides. Borders was scooped up by mega-retailer Kmart in 1992. Incredible Universe, whose stores are nearly big enough to qualify for zip codes, is a division of Tandy Corporation, the folks who put compact Radio Shacks in shopping malls from coast-to-coast.

Try It, You'll Like It

Of course, no one said you have to buy software to enjoy it. Some retailers are exploring the option of renting CD-ROMs. Blockbuster is test-marketing CD-ROMs in 57 of its 3,474 stores. Although initial results haven't exactly reset the revenue curve, Blockbuster is sailing into relatively uncharted territory by retailing CD-ROMs, a phrase still fresh on mainstream lips. To help enhance consumer understanding,

Blockbuster is putting extra effort into supporting these new products, i.e., buying hardware and training store personnel to run multimedia demos.

The notion that people will want to try CD-ROMs before purchasing them is nothing new. The same principle has fueled Blockbuster's successful video-game rentals. In fact, it's been reported that some 60% of all video-game purchases began when a game enthusiast rented the game



Store: Blockbuster
Size: Like the One Down the Street from You
CD-ROMs Available: 200

first. While video games are famous for their addictive replay value, many CD-ROMs have a depth that may also turn rentals into sales. And, if CD-ROM rentals are lucrative enough, chains like Blockbuster may not worry about ever selling the discs at all.

The Iceberg's Tip

This is but a scratching of the retail surface. There are other factors, including encryption technologies and shop-by-phone services — beyond the assumption that purchasing CD-ROMs involves a trip to a store of some kind. Multimedia's future, via CD-ROM, could just as easily arrive in your mailbox.

One thing's for certain: With all the retail experimentation taking place, America's marketers will do everything in their power to make buying CD-ROMs as convenient, as pleasant — and as profitable — as it can possibly be.

In Brief... HARDWARE

Everything's Fine... On Cloud Nine

Billing itself as "the fastest DRAM-based GUI accelerator card on the market," the Cloud 9 Graphics Accelerator was designed to accommodate True



Climbing to new heights: BCP's Cloud 9 VGA accelerator

Color applications. The 32-bit DRAM accelerator, manufactured by Brilliant Computer Products, is being promoted as a cost-efficient way to achieve 64-bit VGA results for less — \$195 gets you the board equipped with 2MB of display memory. The cut-rate package sells you the same board for \$145 but offers 1 MB of display memory. Brilliant Computer Products...(408) 942-3315.

Best Case Scenario

Multimedia notebooks are easily the neatest items since sliced bread, affording users the ultra-convenience of using their CD-ROMs nearly anywhere (OK,



You can ROM on the run with Scenario's CD-ROM notebooks.

so we haven't seen an underwater model...yet.) One of the bold new breed of CD-ROM notebooks is Scenario's DynaVision IV/MM, which features a 486 DX2 with VGA display, a Toshiba 2X drive, and a 16-bit DSP based sound card. But CD-ROM notebooks don't come cheap — Scenario's DynaVision IV/MM's base configuration sells for \$6,295. Scenario...(617) 965-6458.

Digging Roots

Banner Blue Software's deluxe CD-ROM version of their *Family Tree Maker* creates 400 times more storage capacity than the original DOS program. What really distinguishes this new *Family Tree Maker*, however, is its ability to help users trace their own genealogy. The "FamilyFinder" index includes 150 million names listed in U.S. censuses between 1790 and 1880, as well as various other public records. Not

only does *Family Tree Maker* (S60) contain telling information like this, but it also directs users on how to get more info about their particular lineage, with agency addresses and form letters to ease your fact-finding. Once you've figured out where (and who) you came from, the knowledge can be assembled and exported by creating a family tree (in one of ten different styles). (Banner Blue Software...(510) 794-6850.

In Brief... SOFTWARE

Heart Smart

Sooner or later, someone had to create a personal introduction service via CD-ROM. Romulus Productions (of Carmel, Indiana) is making it happen with *CD-Romance*. Here's how it works: For \$50, you buy a disc containing profiles of 300 singles from around the country. You browse



through a "Contact Sheet" screen filled with photos of potential mates. Once your eye's been caught, you can learn more about the person of your choice by calling up their interactive profile, including a video clip, photo montage, personal data sheet, voice message, and a scanned handwritten note. Afterward, you can contact the object of your desire by writing, calling, or E-mailing them. "Advertising" oneself costs \$75 per disc, with future issues grouping singles by interests and geographic region. Romulus plans to sell quarterly upgrades to *CD-Romance* at a discount to registered users. Romulus Productions...(800) 266-4557.

Journey Through the Past

In association with *Scientific American* magazine, Sumeria has created a tour of epochs gone by. *Exploring Ancient Cities* (Windows and Mac on one disc; \$59.95) looks at the splendor of four cities: Crete, Petra, Teotihuacan, and Pompeii. The program starts with *Scientific American* articles and fleshes them out with video, music, and narration (rendered by Rod McKuen). Additionally, much attention is paid to the glorious art native to these ancient places. Sumeria...(800) 478-6374.

Inside the Corridors of Power

H.R. Haldeman had a ringside seat for the most captivating political drama of the 20th century. From January 1969 to April 1973 he served as President Richard Nixon's chief of staff, meticulously documenting the day-to-day activities of the President and the historic Watergate scandal.

The simultaneous release of a major book and a CD-ROM version is unprecedented, and even more significant is the fact that the digital version represents major advantages over the printed volume. Unlike the book, the CD contains the unedited version (except for occasional "national security" deletions) of Haldeman's personal diaries, which contain more than 750,000 words. According to Haldeman's preface, the published book contains approximately 40% of the complete diaries.



Power trio: Nixon, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman

The CD diaries are supplemented with 45 minutes of home movies taken by Haldeman during the Nixon years and more than 700 photographs, many gleaned from the personal scrapbook kept by Mrs. Haldeman. The video footage is narrated by Dwight Chapin, Nixon's appointment secretary.

The interface is a reader's delight, offering an option to view a 2-column display featuring Haldeman's daily observations (left) and the President's official appoint-

ment schedule (right). A summary of daily news events also helps the reader place each day in historical perspective.

Literary efforts on CD-ROM nearly never measure up to the obvious advantages of a print volume. Aside from lack of portability, the scrolling text on a computer monitor normally lacks the intimacy of a book. With *The Haldeman*

Diaries, however, the high-tech world has produced a literary release that overshadows the book. Aside from the obvious appeal of the unedited contents, the multimedia presentation gives this momentous work a sense of contemporary reality that no book can offer.

The text is cross-referenced, allowing readers easy

portrait of Nixon by the man who had the closest working relationship with him.



The Haldeman Diaries recreates Haldeman's busy desktop.

Perhaps one of the most telling anecdotes involves the meeting at Camp David when Nixon instructed Haldeman to resign. The journal entry is significant because it reveals that Nixon had already realized that he, too, would have to resign. On a more personal level, it offers a fascinating glimpse at Nixon's troubled mind. Haldeman writes, "The P was in terrible shape. Shook hands with me, which is the first time he's ever done that."

Some have predicted that multimedia technology will one day replace the printed word. With the release of Haldeman's historical chronicle on CD, that eventuality is suddenly much less distant.

The Haldeman Diaries is published by Sony Electronic Publishing and runs under Windows. It carries a suggested retail price of \$69.95.

— Randy Chase

access to points of personal or historic interest. Names are hyperlinked, allowing the reader to click on an unfamiliar name and gain instant access to a biography. Icons included in the text let readers view photographs relevant to the day's journal entry.

From the perspective of time, the diaries represent an intimate, inside look at Watergate as well as a fascinating



Net Notes

Online services have become such hot commodities, we figured they deserved their own department within NewsLine. Hence, Net Notes...

• Last issue we reported that **America Online** was staving off acquisition offers – and technically, we were right. AOL hasn't been purchased – they've merged, with interactive marketers **Redgate Communications**, who plan to boost AOL's multimedia services. Another new America Online relationship involves MTV, whereby viewers/online-users will be able to contact MTV's Beach House, the channel's summer studio, for late-breaking info on the Lollapalooza Tour.

• Meanwhile, **CompuServe** is celebrating bagging its 2 millionth subscriber (they add 80,000 new subs each month). C-Serve (a division of **H&R Block**) is now publishing its own CD-ROM, which features full-motion video clips from current films and cuts from new CDs.

• **Ventana Media**, in association with **NetManage**, has put together a first-time kit about the Internet. *The Internet Membership Kit* is a boxed set consisting of two books (*The Windows Internet Tour Guide* and *The Internet Yellow Pages*), a trial Internet connection (through CERFnet), and NetManage's Chameleon Sampler, an assemblage of starter software. The Windows kit sells for \$69.95 and can be ordered directly from Ventana at (800) 209-3342.

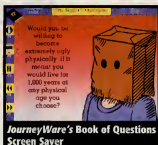
• You may not have heard of **IDT** (International Discount Telecommunications), but this company is ruffling some notable feathers, like those of **AT&T** and **MCI**. AT&T has even complained to the FCC about the Hackensack, NJ, phone carrier, which is offering free Internet access and E-mail capabilities with its long-distance service. IDT claims its economy business plan is 40% cheaper than those of the giant carriers. Equally interesting: IDT is offering an E-mail message service for execs who refuse to join the Computer Age. For \$5.00 a month, IDT will supply you with an online address and immediately relay E-mail messages to your office via fax machine. (Now if they could only respond to all your E-mail...) IDT can be reached at (201) 928-1000.

Saving Face

The great irony about screen savers in the '90s is that today's computer monitors include technology that prevents image burn-in. So why aren't screen savers obsolete?

Because they're cute, they're clever, and people love the visual surprise they offer after a brief hiatus. Some screen savers do more than flash solitary images or backgrounds.

(**ESPN Sports Shorts**, for example, contains video clips, calendar reminders, and trivia questions.) Here are a few quick looks at some of the latest crop:



JourneyWare's Book of Questions Screen Saver



Road Scholar's Coaster



Goodtimes Interactive Software's Fabio Screen Saver



Expert Software's Coral Reef Screen Saver



Moon Valley's ESPN Sport Shorts



Asymetrix's Jurassic Park: The Screen Saver

In Brief... HARDWARE

"It Slices, It Dices..."

Packard Bell's new all-in-one system seems to have everything but a catchy name. Aside from performing standard multimedia computing chores, it also acts as a television set, an AM receiver, a telephone answering machine, and a fax machine. Additionally, it's bundled with 27 software titles. Because PB is promoting



Happy, well-adjusted family sneaks a peek at Packard Bell's new all-in-one multimedia system.

the all-in-one appliance as a home entertainment system, it makes sense that they've designed the unit to fit in with popular home decor styles. In fact, buyers can even accessorize the machine with color accent panels that can be easily attached or removed to suit their tastes. Prices for the all-in-one multimedia machine will be determined by individual retailers. Packard Bell... (818) 886-4600.

Many Cam

Multimedia authors have a new tool at their disposal. The DigitalMedia Color Camera, created by Hitachi and Workstation Technologies, Inc., also performs secu-



The DigitalMedia Color Camera has several applications.

rity and videoconferencing applications. The camera will retail in the \$300 to \$400 range. Other features can be added to the unit, like an audio input jack and a sliding lens shutter. The camera will first be sold to software publishers and equipment manufacturers, and then will be made available to the public. Hitachi... (800) 241-6558.

In Brief... SOFTWARE

First Take on Take 2

This fall should be a big and busy season for newcomer Take 2. The software publisher will charge out of the gate with its first five titles. *Star Crusader* is a wild romp through the cosmos (officially termed a "space-flight combat simulator"), while the education-oriented *Assault on Everest* carries you to the world's tallest mountain. Also slated for fall delivery are *Bureau 13*, an interactive graphic adventure, and a series of educational products (*Picture Pages*) featuring Bill Cosby. Perhaps most bizarre



among Take 2's offerings is *Hell: A Cyberpunk Thriller*, starring the computerized talents of Dennis Hopper and Grace Jones. In *Hell*, a futuristic society manipulates its citizens by creating a synthetic netherworld. All titles will be released for IBM CD-ROM, except for the *Picture Pages* line, which will be available in IBM and Mac CD-ROM formats. Take 2... (212) 941-2988.

Desktop Quarterbacks

Tired of second-guessing professional football coaches? Ready to take the helm and run your own strategies? If so, Sport Accolade has created *All-Pro Video Football* with you in mind. This football coaching sim (\$69.95) is built around an All-Star game and uses the names and stats of real players. Sport Accolade staged and filmed over 600 football plays, using the Orlando Predators of the Arena Football League (standing in for their NFL counterparts). This footage was turned into video clips. (Choose the play, then see it happen.) *All-Pro Video Football* was developed in Script X, which allows the disc to run on either IBM or Mac systems. Accolade...(408) 985-1700.

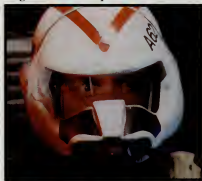
Wing Commander III Goes Hollywood

If you haven't heard of the Wing Commander series yet, you will soon. The first two installments (with sales currently topping the 1.5 million mark) were top-notch futuristic flight-sim/games, among the most hardware-demanding games for their time. Origin's Wing Commander titles set new heights in PC entertainment technology.

In its first incarnations, the Wing Commander world existed solely in the digitized world of the computer. Today, *Wing Commander III* is being acted out on a sound stage in L.A.'s San Fernando Valley.

Welcome to Hollywood, a universe once more distant from Silicon Valley than the actual 350 miles implies. As the connection between north and south grows stronger, the

design process is changing. Computer animation is no longer good enough. Jerky movements and unsynchronized speech are passe, and computer-generated characters are pale imitations of



Computer animation...out. Video is in.

what a digitized environment of real people can offer.

Wing Commander's creator and director, Chris Roberts, a 26-year-old native of England, is sitting in a classic folding canvas chair. But

what he sees is quite different from a traditional movie-director's view. The sound stage walls and floor are swathed in a covering of fluorescent green cloth. There is no scenery, simply an array of lights atop poles and a myriad of differently shaped diffusers. In the middle, actors Mark Hamill and Jason Bernard are preparing for one of many verbal confrontations scripted into the 25-day shoot.

In front of Roberts stand two monitors, and on the screen is a precursor to what players will see on their computer screen — two men in blue uniforms arguing in front of a 3-D rendering of a flight deck. A few brief instructions, a click of the scene slate, and the camera rolls, its output appearing on a battery of computer monitors perched on the sidelines.

The budget for *Wing Commander III: Heart of the*

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Mark Hamill leads the cast of WC III.

Tiger CD-ROM is \$3 million, a new summit in the computer entertainment industry. The staggering sum doesn't faze Roberts. "I have a name brand," he says. "I am not going to lose money on it."

Roberts takes his Hollywood adventure seriously. He hired a pair of scriptwriters with television experience. They produced a 300-page document which will result in

two hours of live video in the game. Actors like Hamill, John Rhys-Davies, and Malcolm McDowell are name brands from the movie world. Traditional film folks like costumers, makeup artists, and key grips mingle on the stage with video producers and technicians.

All the game's backgrounds were rendered before the start of the Hollywood shoot, using powerful Silicon Graphics Indigo machines at Electronic Arts' San Mateo production studio (Origin is owned by EA). Each live shot of the actors is recorded three ways: against black, in silhouette against a white background, and as a composite of the studio take and the computer-generated background.

The silhouetting helps with anti-aliasing, a means of blending edges together to reinforce the illusion that characters and background appear together as in a single scene. Players will be able to study their spaceship from many angles, including outside shots.

Roberts expects worldwide sales to reach 500,000. *Wing Commander III* will be packaged on two CD-ROMs and require Super VGA graphics, a double-speed CD-ROM, and a 16-bit audio card. It will offer more than four dozen flight missions and plenty of opportunity for players to take the story down different paths. And a sense of drama — offend your wing men and you might attend your own funeral.

— Anne Gregor

In Brief... HARDWARE

Card Game

The lowly business card may never be replaced — it's just too good at its job. On the other hand, it's easy for cards to wind up scattered and misplaced. Pacific Crest Technologies understood this when they developed their CardGrabber system, in which cards are slid into a scanner about the size of a Walkman. The captured text is saved in a Windows-based address book. PCT has added a new QuickGrab utility to the product that allows users to capture more complicated images (like logos, signatures, and graphics). QuickGrab is free to registered owners of the CardGrabber system, which retails for \$349. Pacific Crest Technologies...(800) 870-3391.

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In Brief... SOFTWARE

Strummin' Along

For \$49.95, you can take unlimited private guitar lessons—anytime and anyplace (provided you have a multimedia computer



Chord diagrams and fingering patterns are just two areas of study in Learn to Play Guitar.

handy). Designed to instruct both beginners and intermediate players, *Learn to Play Guitar* is a Windows-based CD-ROM from Cambrix Publishing. Composer and production artist Christof Flanders (shown in full-motion video) holds forth on guitar fundamentals, and tackles related topics like scales, transposing notes, and reading tablature. Cambrix Publishing... (818) 992-8484.

Off We Go...

Aviation is the subject of a new series of PC and Mac CD-ROMs from Spectrum HoloByte. The first installment of *Wild Blue Yonder* will focus on the modern jet era and include video clips from the A&E Network's program "Brute Force," and illustrations provided by Squadron Signal



The first volume of Wild Blue Yonder deals with jets that have gone to war...and may still.

Publications. The second *Wild Blue Yonder* title will examine the history of flight from the early pioneers through World War II. Digital Ranch is developing the series for Spectrum HoloByte. Spectrum HoloByte... 1-800-695-GAME.

Maneuver\$

• Although details are sketchy, it has been confirmed that **Knowledge Adventure** has a new investor, **Steven Spielberg**. The filmmaker's interest in the company centers around future educational products. Look for more details next issue.

• It was supposed to create a corporate union worth \$400 million, but **Broderbund** instead decided to ease out of its announced deal with **Electronic Arts**. Why? Apparently, Broderbund reassessed the worth of its stock as compared to E.A.'s, and decided the company was better off going it alone. Broderbund will pay E.A. \$10 million for the privilege of changing its corporate mind.

• **Commodore** (of VIC-20, Commodore 64, and Amiga fame) has announced plans to enter into voluntary liquidation. This marks the end of a company that introduced

millions to home computing in the early to mid '80s. R.I.P.

• You can do a lot with \$2.25 million, and **Software Sorcery** intends to use its newly acquired venture capital (from Enterprise Partners of La Jolla, California) for producing more multimedia titles. **Software Sorcery**, best known for ultra-accurate military sims (accordingly, they supply software training systems to the Department of Defense), is also busy setting up its new educational division under the name "The Young Wizards."

• Very Strategic Alliance — **Microsoft** (through its Home line) and educational publisher **Scholastic** (The Weekly Reader) will combine talents and resources to produce multimedia titles for kids. First on the production list: an adaptation of Scholastic's The Magic School Bus series, featuring the adventures of Ms. Frizzle and her

inquisitive students as they tour the world in their enchanted vehicle. To help promote The Magic School Bus, Microsoft will create a traveling exhibit funded by the National Science Foundation. The exhibit will tour some 100 museums across the country over a 3-year period.

• **InterActive Publishing's** parent company has accepted a \$3 million private placement offering from a Singapore corporation. **Future Vision Holding** will earmark at least part of the funding (from Flextech Holdings Pte Ltd) for new InterActive product development.

• Sign of the Times: Hollywood's **Agency for the Performing Arts** is signing up **HyperBolt Studios** and its founder, Greg Roach. Reportedly, this is the first time a Hollywood talent agency has agreed to represent a multimedia developer.

Convention Calendar

As the summer heat fries your brain, cool off by ducking into one of the many air-conditioned trade shows and conferences. (Remember, the listed phone number will get you more info on the trade show, but won't put you in touch with the actual convention site.)

• MacWorld Expo

August 2-5
World Trade Center/Bayside
Exposition Center
Boston
(617) 361-3941

• CompuExpo '94

September 14-16
San Jose Convention Center
San Jose
(415) 691-1488

• Communications '94

September 20-22
Dallas Convention Center
Dallas
(617) 449-6600

• CD-ROM Expo

October 5-7
World Trade Center
Boston
(800) 945-3311

• MultiCom '94

October 19-20
Washington Convention Center
Washington, D. C.
(703) 683-8800

• Technology + Learning Con.

October 26-28
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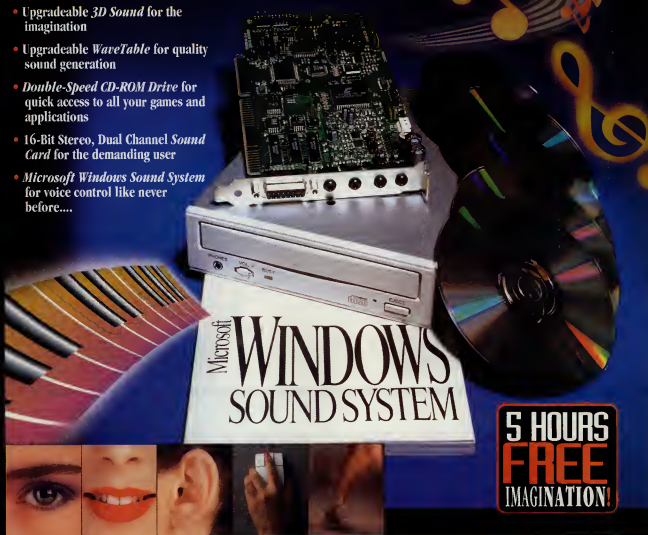


er is coupled with a 7-band equalizer, left to right balance controls, and an LED display so you can see it as well as hear it. The EA-PRO, as it's called, can be used with any electronic device that has mini-jack capabilities. The EA-PRO sells for \$119.95. SC&T2... (602) 470-1334.

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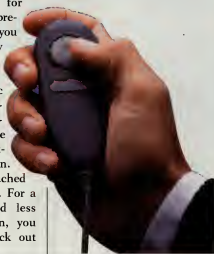
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Avoiding Mouse Traps

Mice are nice, but a bit demanding in terms of *how* they're used — to be effective, the ball on the underside of the mouse must roll on a hard surface. A couple of new prod-

ucts are addressing this limitation through very different approaches. First, the high-tech approach: Interlink Electronic's ProPoint (\$129) is a handheld cursor controller, making it an attractive alternative for applications (e.g., presentations) where you need to be away from the screen. ProPoint incorporates an ergonomic design and 360-degree cursor control, along with the standard dual-button mouse design. Interlink can be reached at (805) 484-1331. For a less technical (and less expensive) solution, you may want to check out

The Mouse Arm (\$39.95) from Ring King Visibles. This device is a rubberized urethane attachment with straps and buckles that secure it to a chair arm. For more info, call Ring King at (319) 263-8144.



In Brief... HARDWARE

3X - 17% = \$

NEC is discounting its MultiSpin 3X ROM drives, by as much as 17% on some models. Biggest price break: The MultiSpin 3 Xp, formerly selling for \$600 and now reduced to \$499. The MultiSpin 3 Xi was retailing for \$500 and is currently marked down to \$465. Finally, there's the MultiSpin 3 Xp, originally selling for \$455 and now going for \$415. (All prices listed are estimated selling prices supplied by NEC). NEC... (708) 860-9500.

NEC

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PC MAGAZINE, MAY, 1994



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Product Information Number 153



How Much Computer Do You Need?



If you're thinking about getting a more powerful computer, you're probably wondering what to get. And if you already

have the newest, fastest machine on the block, you're getting questions. "Do I need to buy a new computer?" "What kind of system should I get?"

These are tough questions with so many new processors and different types of systems available, but you might be surprised to find that the latest and greatest systems aren't needed to play multimedia CD-ROMs.

The big news for Macintosh buyers this year was the arrival of Apple's first Power Macs, which use the PowerPC CPU jointly developed by Motorola and IBM. Compared to traditional Macs, with Motorola's 68000-family processors, PowerMacs promise tremendous performance, but this promise won't be fully delivered for a while. To take advantage of the chips' power, programs must be rewritten in native code, the new set of instructions and opcodes of the PowerPC. For Mac software that isn't native, a PowerMac emulates an older Macintosh, running software (native PowerPC code) that tells it how to read and execute instructions like a 68030 or 68040 CPU.

That PowerMacs do this so well is a tribute to the CPU's power — it emulates 68040 code almost as fast as a Quadra can run it directly. But unless you have native-code versions of the programs you run most often, there's no advantage to having a PowerMac. Publishers of graphics programs and productivity software seem to be moving quickly to native PowerPC versions, but multimedia publishers are still trying to put both Mac and Windows versions of their programs on a single CD-ROM — it'll be a while before they directly support the PowerPCs as well.

In the IBM-compatible market, systems with Intel Pentium CPUs have been available for the better part of a year, but the days of the first-generation 60 and 66 MHz chips are already numbered. Many high-end systems now use Intel's latest 90 and 100 MHz "P54C" Pentiums; besides being 50 percent faster, they also run cooler, use less power, and reportedly cost less to make than the original Pentium chips. At the low end, Intel's 100MHz DX4 chip performs nearly as well at a lower cost, and it also lets manufacturers use well-tested 486 motherboards with slight modifications.

Besides making CPU chips for Apple, IBM is also planning to build complete PowerPC-based systems to compete with Intel-powered PCs. These Power Personal PCs should be real screamers, but native-code support will be an even bigger an issue than it is for PowerMacs. However, the first examples aren't scheduled to appear until the end of this year — a long time away in computer terms — so these systems shouldn't be a big concern for today's shoppers.

According to an old software proverb, you should never buy version 1.0 of any software application. A similar principle might apply to early implementations of new CPUs. PCs with

the first Intel Pentium processors have sold well and they're certainly fast, but they've suffered from more hardware incompatibilities and software driver problems than tried-and-true 486 systems. Apple's new PowerMac systems look pretty promising, but native-mode software is still fairly rare and, with only three models of PowerMacs currently available, the choices of options and configurations are pretty limited.

The new CPUs are fascinating, but, for the time being, a healthy 486 PC or Mac Quadra is all the computer you need to run multimedia CD-ROMs. And since they aren't the newest, most powerful systems anymore, their prices have dropped to very attractive levels — plenty of great multimedia systems are priced well under \$2000. Whatever might develop in '95 and '96, Quadas and garden-variety 486s are terrific values right now and, as the most popular systems out there, you can bet they'll get plenty of software support for years to come.

According to an old software proverb, you should never buy version 1.0 of any software application. A similar principle might apply to early implementations of new CPUs.

Tim Victor is a technology enthusiast who has worked as a writer and programmer, most recently for Hanna-Barbera Productions. He currently resides — with his guitar, mandolin, and assorted computer components — in Greensboro, NC. Email: tim@well.sf.ca.us



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them. It's no fantasy: it's brought to you by Microsoft's WinG ("win gee") technology, a new set of software tools for exploiting the raw speed of your video card within Windows, and it ushers in a wave of fast-paced and graphics intensive games.

Windows is an ideal way to run business and productivity applications, but it has always led to compromises for the sake of compatibility with a wide variety of video display cards and monitors.

Under DOS, a game programmer can literally take over your computer and control it at the lowest level — drawing objects directly into the video-card's memory (its *frame buffer*). This means developing and testing the game to support various proprietary video-card standards, or limiting the game to support the least common denominator — usually grainy low-resolution screens. The game designer also has to control every popular make and model of sound card, and deal with inevitable technical-support calls that can rob the developer of profits and drive up the cost of game software.

Windows programmers have the luxury of leaving these support issues to Microsoft or the hardware vendor, since the video and sound-card device drivers provide standard tech-

niques for graphics, sound and music. This has already led to the explosive growth of Windows-based multimedia.

Yet Windows games have never held a candle to the best games running under DOS. For years, PCs have been shipping with Windows preinstalled, and millions of people don't know anything else — and really don't care to learn about DOS. Or maybe you're like me, and have been so spoiled by Windows that dealing with DOS and installing DOS games seems like drudgery.

When Microsoft ships Windows 4.0 late this year, DOS will officially be dead, but game players will rejoice. New graphics support in Windows 4.0 gives games the ability to copy shapes directly into the video card's frame buffer, creating animated moving "sprites." This trick also lets Video for Windows give some video cards larger playback windows or faster, smoother motion. Standardized video support also opens up games to running at higher video resolutions and more colors, even the ability to switch resolutions "on the fly."

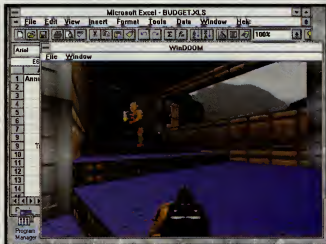
When a game is converted to Windows, it can exploit standard video, sound, mouse, and joystick drivers. It has a full set of drawing and painting tools to play with. It is unfettered from the old 640K DOS limit on available RAM that leads to confus-

ing and tricky CONFIG.SYS changes.

The 16-bit version of WinG is automatically installed when you run these games with Windows 3.1 or 3.11. When you upgrade to Windows 4.0, you'll also discover that many of your existing DOS games will run from Windows directly. And with WinG, Windows 4.0 games have full 32-bit memory access, and the advanced multithreading that allows a game to move a spaceship, update the score, animate an explosion, and loop the sound effect — seemingly simultaneously. What's more, CD-ROMs also transfer data faster, bypassing the slow MSCDEX in favor of direct 32-bit access.

Other Windows conventions will bring new possibilities including 3-D

graphics, network support for multiplayer games, and a New At Work technology that allows you to talk to a friend over the phone while playing a two-player game by modem — using the same phone line. ☺



ID Software demonstrates a preliminary version of *WINDOOW*, with its fantastic 3-D graphics intact and running full speed under Windows.

Charles Brannon, a former program editor for *CompuServe* magazine and project manager for *Emps*, now supervises a Novell and Windows for Workgroups network, and works as a free-lance writer and consultant. Email (CompuServe): 70720, 462



QuickTime Mania



What's the driving force behind the explosion of Macintosh CD-ROM multimedia? Faster, cheaper, color Macs?

Soaring sales of CD-ROM drives?

Aggressive marketeering by industry

megaplayers? The real reason that Mac CD-ROMs have taken off is that little extension called QuickTime.

QuickTime is Apple's system software for creating, editing, and playing video, animations, and sounds. You've all got it in your System folder, and you probably take it for granted. That's a change from when QuickTime first came out, when a lot of people thought it was a bad joke. The first QuickTime movies were squintingly small and crawled slower than a slug on ice. Any kung-fu flick had better sound sync, and QuickTime's habit of dropping frames made movies look like they'd been chopped with a meat cleaver.

Nonetheless, QuickTime made all the difference for the development of Mac multimedia. Suddenly there was a single, Apple-sponsored format for computer movies — a standard that played even on pokey CD-ROM drives. Quick as you can say digital video revolution, Mac users demanded that every CD include QuickTime movies, and developers hastened to oblige. Sure, you needed the patience of Job to sit through a movie, but the kick wasn't that it looked good, it was that you could play a movie on your computer at all.

Microsoft, noting the QuickTime envy of Windows users, rushed out its own copycat standard, Video for Windows. Revealingly, many developers still create multimedia CDs on Macs and then port them to the PC.

Over the years, QuickTime has become somewhat better. The newest version, QuickTime 2.0 (which should be available from Apple by the time you read this), marks the first major

improvement. It just about lives up to the Apple-hype heaped on the first release. QuickTime finally offers big video at faster frame rates — 15 frames per second at the full 13-inch screen even on 68030 Macs. If you're lucky enough to have an 040 machine or, bless you, a Power Mac, you can watch movies at 30 fps, full video speed, and full size. Add in MPEG compression support and CD-quality music files that don't eat your whole hard disk, and QuickTime 2.0 finally delivers the no-limits Macintosh cinema that we've been waiting for.

QuickTime is not just for playback, of course, but for creating your own multimedia, too. If you want to make your own QuickTime movies but don't have a camcorder and capture board, there are lots of CD-ROMs full of readymade QuickTime clips you can cut and paste into your productions. Here are a few of my favorites:

- **Pyromania! Playing With Fire.** If you never shot enough match rockets in junior high, or you just want to see your Mac burn and explode, you'll love Pyromania. This CD includes 19 movie-style effects, including explosions with shock waves, explosions with flak, explosions in space, billows of flame, walls of flame, and a complete set of fire-edged wipe transitions. Visual Concept Engineering (818) 367-9187; fax (818) 362-3490. \$199.95.

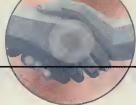
- **Wild, Weird, and Wacky and The Archives of History.** If you're looking for off-the-wall clips, seek no further. On *Wild, Weird, and Wacky* (see Fall 1993 issue), thrill to the Bavarian Finger-Pull, the Ode to the Wacky Chimp, and my personal favorite, Whipping Nickels Off Tongues. The more serious-minded can dip into the *Archives of History* (see

April/May 1994 issue) to see Haile Selassie shake hands with Casey Stengel, Reagan testify before the HUAC, and JFK vote for himself. MPI Multimedia, (708) 460-0555; \$79.95 each.

- **Wrapture Reels.** This disc isn't bizarre, but it is beautiful. You'll find scudding clouds, fluttering butterflies, waving flowers, and sparkling sequins, as well as a selection of abstract animated textures. I play these every once and a while to remind me that there is a world of beauty beyond my Mac. Form and Function, (415) 664-4010; \$199.

QuickTime 2.0 finally delivers the no-limits Macintosh cinema that we've been waiting for.

Steven Anzovin is the author of three Mac multimedia books. An expanded edition of his book about computing and the environment, *The Green PC* (Windsor/McGraw Hill), is due out this summer. Email: anzovin@aol.com.



Got Them Ol' Operating System Blues Again...



When the moon is full,
are you ever possessed by
a terrible compulsion to
change your operating
system? When Windows

has locked up for the umpteenth time,
do you swear that there just has to be a

better way? Actually, it was letters from our readers that caused me to seriously consider migrating to a more elegant and efficient platform.

Several of you have e-mailed to praise the virtues of OS/2, and ask why I don't mention some of the OS/2 shareware that's available. Why not, indeed? After all, I had a copy of OS/2 for Windows on hand. I've also got a 386 "hot rod" at home that exceeds all of the minimum requirements demanded by IBM. This latest version of OS/2 came on a CD-ROM, so I wouldn't even have to sit there swapping 27 disks. Hey, piece of cake!

Yeah, well, the Greeks had a better word for it: *hubris*.

I should have guessed something was wrong as soon as I found that I had to manually revise the CONFIG.SYS file on the preliminary floppy. A little voice should have said that this thing simply isn't ready for prime time. But

bravely I plunged on...seven long phone calls with some very patient tech-support people at Boca Raton, two phone calls to the sound-board manufacturer, three downloads from faraway BBSs to gather patches and drivers, a dozen rewrites of CONFIG.SYS, and a painstakingly unstacked drive later — and I was still staring at a blank, black screen. OS/2 obstinately refused to load. Maybe instead of a 180-page installation manual, it should simply ship with a sticker that reads: Best left to tight-lipped men in blue suits — do NOT try this at home! I offer this cautionary tale partly by way of explanation as to why I haven't yet covered any OS/2 shareware, and partly just to make you feel better... now you know that professional reviewers and columnists often suffer the same time-wasting indigni-

Mac Watch

How do you cure those ol' operating system blues? How do you spell GUI relief? Can you say M-A-C? Thanks to all of the Mac users who recommended shareware discs and sources. Several leading distributors have sent in dozens of discs. It'll take a while to evaluate them all... but next month watch for a feature giving you the lowdown: titles, companies, phone numbers and recommendations. Click! and it works...aah, how sweet it is!

ties and frustrations that you do.

It was with an audible sigh of relief that I returned to Windows — which surely can only be considered the "least worst" of the PC interface options — and loaded CICA Shareware for Windows (\$29.95, Walnut Creek, (800) 786-9907), a collection of 3000 recent programs. Walnut Creek also offers CD-ROMs full of shareware for Unix, NeXT, X11R5, Amiga, and Atari users. Oh, yes, and then there's their Hobbes OS/2 disc (\$29.95). Can't tell you what it's like, of course, but the package comes with a rave endorsement from John Dvorak (huh, bet HE never has a problem with o.s. installations!).

Prize for this month's most intriguing shareware collection must go to *The Arsenal Files* (Arsenal Computer, (800) 9CD-SALE). If you're tired of the kind of "Best of..." duplications found on many other discs, then you'll find that *The Arsenal Files* offers a really unusual selection, from survivalist texts to information from the Buddhist network, and from offbeat edutainment to a good selection of electronic

'zines. The only word of warning is that since this company also publishes adult CD-ROMs, the graphics sub-directory on *The Arsenal Files* does contain a lot of ladies in saucy lingerie. By the way, it even includes a collection of OS/2 shareware.

A lot of readers have e-mailed their appreciation of the Information Highway material on The Disc! If you want to explore an entire CD-ROM of Internet material — RFCs, FYIs, STDs, and other tools — then try the *Atlantis Internet CD-ROM* (Atlanta Innovation, (800) 285-4680). Essential browsing before stepping off the curb — the traffic's murder out there these days.



David A. Wade reads all comments and suggestions posted to him at cdromtoday@AOL.COM.

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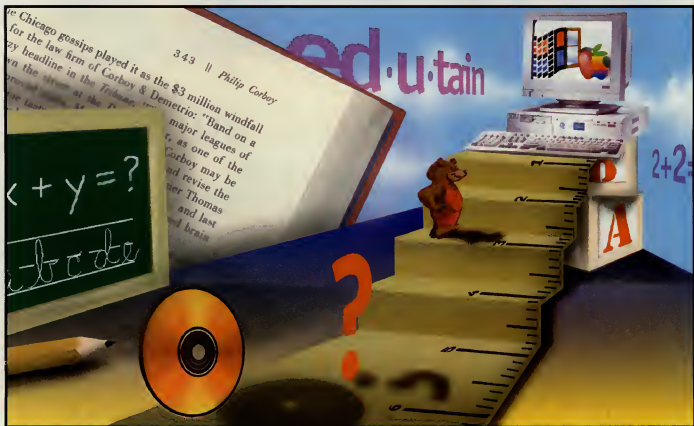
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KIDSOFT

The Kids' Software Club

Product Information Number 39

Are We Learning Yet?



Does CD-ROM educational software really deliver? That depends on you. Here's how to approach the rising tide of titles on the market.

Some software designers and publishers call it *stealth learning*, as if a child's imagination were sheathed in an impenetrable fortress, vulnerable only to sneak attack. Other software makers have popularized the word *edutainment*, looking to make spelling lessons as engaging as *Sonic the Hedgehog*. But are kids learning anything?

Certainly, technology can help kids learn. But to get the right results, parents must choose programs that are appropriate to their kids' needs and ages. Educational software is moving quickly to CD-ROM. But all the best features of CD-ROM and multimedia — the

Peter Scisco

entrancing video clips, the dazzling sound effects, the clever animation — can make it hard to see the benefits. How do parents choose the right kind of CD-ROM program for their kids?

There's no question that parents want the power of CD-ROM multimedia computers in the home and in the hands of their kids. Eager to supplement the education their kids get at school, many parents see a solution in CD-ROM software. A new austerity, framed in nervous economic news, and illuminated by a bleak job market for graduates, is driving

computers home. Increasingly, computers are finding a place as electronic tutors, rather than as home-office tools or hobby gadgets. Expectations and technology are rising as prices and resistance are falling.

The companies that manufacture multimedia upgrade kits and multimedia computers reap the benefit of an anxious Baby Boomer generation. Even as the media portrays an educational system collapsing under the weight of confusion, regulation, and apathy, computer makers and software publishers trumpet learning programs and multimedia as the key to the future.

The challenge of choosing the right CD-ROM software for your kids, of choosing between entertainment value and educational content, is difficult. These learning tools are radically different from anything parents had when they were kids. The key to getting the right disc for your kids or for the family is to know the types of programs available. Then, you can find the most helpful, interesting, entertaining, and educational discs.

Part of the Game

First, we have multimedia games, such as the *Putt-Putt* (Humongous Entertainment) and *Carmen Sandiego* (Broderbund) series, and the interactive adventures from *Sanctuary Woods*. These games, and others like them, build an entertaining framework to carry the lessons hidden within. Some of the frameworks, such as *Carmen Sandiego's* crimstopper milieu, or the *Victor Vector & Yondo* graphic adventures, are meant for older kids — those in middle school and beyond. Others, like the *Putt-Putt* and *Fatty Bear* titles, are simplified for younger audiences. But adults will enjoy sharing the games with their kids because of the clever design and appealing characters.

All of these games share a claim to teach as they entertain. They are prime examples of the term *edutainment*. The *Carmen Sandiego* series wears its educational content on its sleeve, making it a favorite of teachers everywhere. On one hand, the *Carmen Sandiego* games claim to teach history, geography, and astronomy, depending on the title. But the results can be more subtle than that.

While playing the *Carmen* games reinforces classroom facts,

its main benefit is teaching kids how to find answers. In a society rapidly entering — willingly or not — the informa-

tion age, those who master the art of finding answers hold an advantage over those who don't.



Now up to its fourth in a series, *Sanctuary Woods' Victor Vector & Yondo* graphic adventure line features deduction and logic puzzles.



The *Eagle Eye Detective* series from Electronic Arts has kids playing the role of a male (*Jake Eagle*) or female (*Jennifer Eagle*) gumshoe, solving mysteries after examining evidence and following clues.



For the younger set (ages 3-8), *Humongous Entertainment's Putt-Putt Goes to the Moon* offers a virtual playground of animation and exploration.

The educational focus of games like *Putt-Putt Goes to the Moon* or *Victor & Yondo: The Last Dinosaur Egg* isn't as easy to see as it is in a *Carmen Sandiego* title or similar programs like those in the *Eagle Eye Detective* series (Electronic Arts/E*A Kids). In these games, the publisher claims to be teaching such things as creative thinking, logical reasoning, puzzle solving, and the like. Valuable skills to be sure, but difficult for schools to measure, much less parents.

Short of locking one group of kids away with nothing but computers and another with standard teaching tools, it's impossible to calculate the benefits of edutainment software. Does that make it useless? Certainly not. Classroom benefits aside, the interaction between kids and technology is beneficial in itself. As they play, kids learn to master the complex tools that will be part of their lives.

Tyke Casting

Another set of edutainment CD-ROM software dedicates its games to developing distinct skills. Most of these titles are aimed at preschoolers or kids in the earliest grades. A recent release from The Software Toolworks, *Mario's Early Years CD-ROM Collection*, is one good example. This disc combines several activities that help kids learn to recognize colors, numbers, and letters.

Two other examples, on a slightly more sophisticated level, are the *Sound it Out*

Land titles (phonics and letter recognition) from Conexus; see review on p. 100), and *Bailey's Book House* (Edmark). The latter presents five pre-reading activities in a fanciful, colorful workshop. There's a typewriter game for introducing the keyboard, word games, and two creative sections where kids make cards and stories. (Also see the Dream Team Series coverage on p. 94 in the Reviews section in this issue.)

For parents who want to use the home computer to help their youngest children, programs like these can have a measurable benefit. When added to other learning activities, CD-ROM pro-



Mario's Early Years CD-ROM Collection, from The Software Toolworks, combines a number of activities for preschoolers to teach colors, numbers, and letters.

grams can boost a child's fundamental understanding of the world with colors, shapes, and sounds.

Not Your Father's Flashcard

Playing games and picking colors are fine activities for very young children. But what if your child is already in school? What if he or she is having trouble with a specific subject — math or spelling, for example? For years, the most traditional use of learning software has been electronic flashcards, a style often referred to as *drill-and-practice*.

Especially well suited for math study, drill-and-practice programs focus on getting students to speed up their computational skills. Two companies have enjoyed the lion's share of success with drill-and-practice software — Davidson & Associates and The Learning

Company. And now those two companies are putting their programs on CD-ROM.

There's little technical reason for such drill-and-practice stalwarts as *Math Blaster*, *SpellBound!*, *Operation Neptune!*, and *Algebra Blaster 3* to move to CD-ROM. None of these titles offers much more than what you get on the floppy-disk version. But parents who

are trying to conserve space on the family computer, or who like the added security of running kids' software from a separate drive, will welcome the ability to run educational software from the CD-ROM drive.

Davidson's *Math Blaster: In Search of Spot* is an excellent example of a math drill program built for CD-ROM. With simple but captivating graphics and animation, the program succeeds in keeping kids focused on the task at hand — solving math

problems. Kids increase their computational speed, which in turn leads to better test scores and better preparation for more sophisticated math. The CD-ROM



Math Blaster, a learning classic from Davidson, has evolved over the years with new technologies. The premise has remained the same — hone math skills in outer space.

version helps kids achieve those goals.

For older kids, The Learning Company has put its excellent *Operation Neptune!* on CD-ROM (see review on p.



The Learning Company's SpellBound! uses reinforcement with games to help kids learn how to spell new words and "graduate" from one level to the next.

102). This program also boosts math skills. But the problems in *Operation Neptune!* are more sophisticated, and the entire exercise uses a storyline to entice kids into a learning adventure.

Aside from classroom benefits, the interaction between kids and technology is a worthy activity by itself.

Math Blaster has no such story.

Operation Neptune! is ideal for pre-algebra drills. An on-board calculator not only helps kids solve problems, it also gives them practice in using a calculator. And since the SAT I allows the use of calculators, that's a skill worth practicing.

If spelling is the subject your kids need help with, The Learning Company's *SpellBound!* (reviewed on p. 102) should find a place in your CD-ROM library. The program plays from the disc, but kids can save their games to the computer's hard drive. Parents will like the program's ability to use customized spelling lists — extremely helpful when kids are bringing weekly word lists home from school. Kids will like the colorful graphics, entertaining word games, and the program's ability to speak hundreds of words.

Terrific Tools

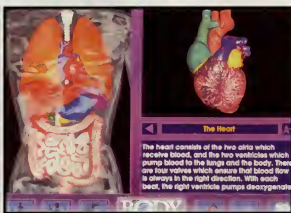
Skill-building or drill-and-practice programs focus on specific areas. They can

help kids learn facts, but they do little to help kids apply that knowledge to the outside world. That's where CD-ROM titles come in. There are many good discs available to help kids with school assignments. And there are even more that let kids explore their own creative impulses.

When it comes to writing, *Student Writing Center* (The Learning Company) gives students in middle school through college a powerful and easy-to-use word processor (see review on p. 110). Whether composing a report, a newsletter, correspondence, a sign, or a journal entry, all the tools for getting the job done effectively are here. Kids can cut and paste from their diary, which helps them build ideas for papers and reports.

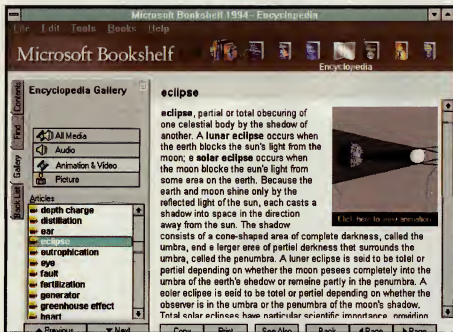
The program makes it easy for kids to produce high-quality papers according to Modern Language Association style, the format universally accepted by high

version of the program adds hundreds of pieces of clip art to the program. Unfortunately, the program requires installation to the hard drive — although the graphics can remain on the CD-ROM.



Knowledge Adventure's 3-D Body Adventure teaches kids about the human body through games and interactive visual tours.

If it's design and publishing that you and your kids want, make it easy on yourself with Broderbund's *Print Shop Deluxe CD Ensemble*. Not only do you get everything you need to print cards, banners, stationery, and other documents, but the CD version includes several extra collec-



The '94 version of Microsoft Bookshelf is a terrific all-around resource to have on any CD-ROM bookshelf.

school and university teachers. Students will especially welcome the feature that automatically formats and compiles endnotes and bibliographies. The CD-ROM

tions of fonts and clip art.

Other tools, mostly reference materials, abound on CD-ROM. Selecting the right tool for your family may be

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MAGIC AND MEANING-
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PUTNAM NEW MEDIA

Product Information Number 208

based several on factors, not the least of which is price. You may want a full-fledged encyclopedia, or you may want a more general resource. In the latter category, *Microsoft Bookshelf 1994* makes a great choice. It includes the critically acclaimed *American Heritage Dictionary 3rd Ed.*, *Roget's Thesaurus*, *Hammond's World Atlas*, and four other top-notch reference tools.

Encyclopedia CD-ROMs from Grolier or Compton's NewMedia are a must-have for any family. Both are excellent references, and can be used for research or just for satisfying any burning curiosity.

Other choices well worth consider-

A CD-ROM can only be as good as the quality of the material it presents.

ing if you want more specific references are CD-ROM titles from Knowledge Adventure. From insects to space travel, inside the human body, and across the human imagination, titles like *Bug Adventure*, *3-D Body Adventure*, *The Discoverers*, *Science Adventure II*, and others, make a great addition to any family CD-ROM library.

Specific reference materials, such as those for music and science, are also available from a number of publishers. If you have a student at your house interested in Beethoven, bugs, dinosaurs, the American Civil War, or just about any topic you can think of, you can find a CD-ROM reference to help them. When selecting an electronic reference, investigate the content behind the disc, if possible. A CD-ROM can only be as good as the quality of the material it presents. After the content, consider ease of use and system requirements. Magazines such as this one can help in your selection process.

Family Outings

Finally, there are many CD-ROMs for families interested in spending time together. Sharing a disc on the family

computer may not seem as warm as sipping cocoa in front of a fire, but it's usually more fun than staring at the television. For times like these, parents can check out some of the karaoke-style CD-ROMs on store shelves.

Dr. T's Sing-A-Long: Kids Classics (Dr. T's Music Software) is one of the most interactive CD-ROM titles you can find anywhere. Run it through your computer for CD-quality songs, and follow the bouncing ball. Soon you'll have brother and sister belting out such golden oldies as "This Old Man," "I'm a Little Teapot," and others.

Another fun music title for slightly older kids is *The Musical World of Professor Piccolo* (OpCode Interactive). With this disc, kids can study different instruments, and learn about music styles ranging from rock to classical. If you have a budding composer at your



Dr. T's Sing-A-Long Kids Classics, a karaoke-style CD-ROM, features tunes most younger kids know. The latest from Dr. T is Sing-A-Long Around the World, a version with international songs.

house, this disc can show them exactly how music works.

And we also recommend that you tune in to *Tuneland* (7th Level), which ranks as one of the most clever, entertaining, and technically sound discs for kids. Part hide-and-seek, part Mother Goose, and with hefty helpings of sing-along fun, *Tuneland* should be on the shelf of anyone who wants to share CD-ROM time with small children.



One of the most charming and musically arresting kids' titles is Tuneland from 7th Level.

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On the Disc!

We have a variety of excellent educational demos and samplers on this issue's companion Disc! PC users and their children (ages 5 and up) can jump into *Adventures with Oslo* — a young-learning science title that features a colorful, one-eyed robot. *Wiggins in Storyland* is a delightful "story writing" education product for youngsters. And don't forget to check out the large collection of Hans Christian Andersen short stories, *Aesop's Fables* and classic novels such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Aladdin and His Lamp*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and more.

Mac users will also get a chance to meet Oslo and to read the electronic library of classic American stories. And two Davidson & Associates education titles have excellent demos — *The Multimedia Workshop* and *The Cruncher*. *The Multimedia Workshop* gives children ages 10 and up a chance to produce multimedia presentations for school projects or just for fun. *The Cruncher* is an easy-to-use spreadsheet that includes animation, graphics, and sound effects.

You'll find more details on these demos and samples in our Disc! pages (see p. 8).

So Many Discs, So Little Time

Don't be frustrated or intimidated by the sheer number of educational CD-ROM titles you see in the stores. If you know what you need, you can quickly narrow down your choices. But, as with movies and books, don't be afraid to experiment. A current trend to rent CD-ROM titles in video-store outlets (Blockbuster was the first to try it) will make it easier, and less expensive, to give CD-ROM titles a lookover. If your favorite video store doesn't stock them, talk to the manager. Other CD-ROMs, like *The Disc!*, which accompanies this magazine, can also help parents choose appropriate educational titles for their families.

Interactivity is the key to good CD-ROM multimedia programs. It's the single element that separates it from television and movies. Fire your child's imagination with games, tutors, and references that give them a new way to read, a new way to play, and the tools for a new world.

ATTENTION, READERS!

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Grolier Electronic Publishing

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Humongous Entertainment

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Microsoft

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Sanctuary Woods

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And Now For Something Completely Different...

Monty Python's 25th Anniversary Celebrated with...uh...CD-ROM Thingie

1969. The world is in a state of upheaval, reeling from new ideas, social unrest, and the advent of wah-wah guitar. In a secluded warehouse on the north side of London, a super secret offshoot of British Intelligence's M5 unit, known only as M33 and a

Gerding (David)

third, has hatched a plot to subvert the ongoing social revolution with a powerful new "media drug." Their strategy? Stultify the restless, grungy masses with inhumanly large doses of lunacy and droll, anarchic wit.

Acting under the direct telepathic orders of Queen Victoria (as relayed by a telepathically sensitive poodle code-named "the Hamster"), field agents Chapman, Cleese, Gilliam, Idle, Jones, and Palin proceed to launch Operation "Monty Python's Flying Circus"....

Regardless of whose history you choose to believe, this actually is the 25th anniversary of the appearance of one of the most popular cult television series of all time. 7th Level is honoring the occasion by bringing the Python experience to the



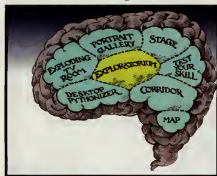
On the DISC!

Get a glimpse of the strange world of Monty Python in our brief "trailer." (It runs a little differently each time.)

PC. Bearing a name any Python aficionado could appreciate, *Monty Python's Flying Circus "The Secret to Intergalactic Success" [Earth Edition]* should hit the shelves in August. 7th Level promises Python fans everywhere the world's first "interactive CD-ROM Thingie."

TuneLand, 7th Level's debut title for kids, set new high water marks for production values and a sense of fun. Turning its focus to adults, 7th Level is raising the stakes by setting the difficult goal for itself of getting grown-up comedy — of sorts — to play on a PC screen. If you can remember the last time a piece of software made you laugh, intentionally, you know this is a real challenge.

The Secret to Intergalactic Success is



Mrs. Zambesi's Brain — your phenological launching pad

a Windows-based, Monty-melange of video clips and animation from the original show, tied together with an absurd interface and a series of puzzles, Python-inspired games, and a Windows "desktop Pythonizer." There are plenty of surprises and interaction in store for the player, moving the title out of the ubiquitous "menu of video clips" multimedia titles

and firmly into the realm of the enjoyably weird.

"We approached the design and navigation from a Pythonesque point of view. If you think of the original TV show, they constantly set up normal situations and then completely veered off into unknown territory," says Robert Tercek, one of the title's producers. "There are a lot of conventions in the PC world ripe for parody, even in entertainment software. The reason I was so excited to work on this project was to turn some of these sacred cows in the PC business into hamburger."

"The Monty Python CD-ROM...is going to be a great step forward for civilization, if not for all our bank balances."

— Terry Gilliam

Each time you run the program, you're dumped into one of several "scenes." Easily accessible scenes include the Exploding TV Room, the Portrait Gallery, the Exploratorium, and the Corridor. But, says Tercek, "There are plenty of cul de sacs and hidden rooms. Nothing is as it seems."

You navigate to and from the various scenes using a phenological map of the brain of Mrs. Zambesi. (Python buffs will remember Zambesi as one of the high-pitched "pepper pot ladies," played by Terry Jones.) Each scene is "alive" with animation that happens whether the player is poking around with the mouse or just sitting and watching.

You can access a multitude of Python video clips and animation by

clicking on the appropriate part of the screen. Clicking on the television set in the TV Room, for example, plays video of the exploding orchestra and other sketches. And, yes, there is a rather large penguin on top of the television set, and it looks rather explosive.

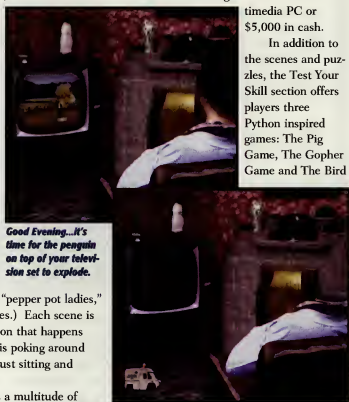
While some clips are easily "found," others require a bit of searching. Because each click draws an unpredictable response, the process is thoroughly engrossing. A small sampling of the sketches which can be discovered in the various scenes include Dead Parrot, Spam, Nudge Nudge, and The Dirty Vicar.

Each scene also has a logic puzzle built into it which you begin to solve by thoroughly exploring the scene. As you "solve" each of these scenes, the associated lobe of Mrs. Zambesi's brain lights up. And 7th Level has

built a contest into the fabric of the game itself. Players skillful enough or sufficiently deranged to discover the Secret will be eligible to win a new multimedia PC or

\$5,000 in cash.

In addition to the scenes and puzzles, the Test Your Skill section offers players three Python inspired games: The Pig Game, The Gopher Game and The Bird



Good Evening...It's time for the penguin on top of your television set to explode.

What have you done with me 'ead?

An Exclusive and Somewhat Serious Interview with Terry Gilliam

While Terry Gilliam's career began with his extraordinary Python animation, his filmography as a feature film director to date includes *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, *Jabberwocky*, *Time Bandits*, *Brazil*, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, and most recently, *The Fisher King*. The latter film won six academy-award nominations, and Mercedes Raoul's role in the film garnered an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. Gilliam is currently embarking on two new feature-film projects.

CDRT: How'd you get involved with *7th Level*?

Gilliam: I was at a party at Michael Kamen's house. Michael wrote the score for *Brazil*, *Baron Von Munchausen*, *Die Hard* and other things, and I met Bob [Ezrin]. There. Bob just started talking with a lot of enthusiasm. I was in a very depressed mood, naturally, so I was intrigued that anyone was enthusiastic about anything.

CDRT: Why were you depressed?

Gilliam: I'm one of the millions of unemployed people in Britain. I haven't shot a film for the last three and a half years.

CDRT: Is it true that your original reaction to "interactivity" was mostly negative?

Gilliam: I thought it was very limiting. I think the great thing about interactivity and all this CD-ROM stuff is that after using it for a while you realize how interesting the real world actually is, so it has proven itself valuable somewhat.

Seriously, what got me interested was that I like the idea of Python invading the computers of all the bored office workers around the world.

CDRT: So it was the notion of bringing some of that Python silliness to the PC that got you hooked?

Gilliam: It's the idea of bringing the Python anarchy into the computer. It's something new while simultaneously being a nice way of recycling old stuff. We're all trying to be as ecologically conscious as possible these days, so I thought recycling old comedy was just as important as recycling old paper. The idea originally was that rather than a [system error] message coming up, for example, that the Colonel would pop up instead and say, "All right, stop this silliness!" We really started talking about making something like an extension of what *After Dark* does, a screen saver that really becomes much more than that. It appears to be that, but it's really totally invading your whole system. That's where it all began and that's what I liked about it.

CDRT: What's been your involvement with the project?



Gilliam a-go-go in the Corridor

Gilliam: Well, I had to make tea and coffee for Bob Ezrin and Robert Tercek when they came to my house. It stretched my creative skills to the limit. They asked for milk and sugar, but I feel I'm pretty inventive when it comes to tea.

CDRT: What do you think of the project so far?

Gilliam: It's actually great. I dragged Bob over to Michael Palin's house when Bob came over to London with [the work in progress] so that Michael could get a look at it. It's really like Python reborn, or born-again Python for that matter. It brings back a lot of memories for those of us who were around when it first went on the air. What I find amusing is that the technology is available now to do what I was doing 25 years without getting your hands dirty, and it's supposed to be really easy. Tercek photographed my artwork and then, when they got it back [and digitized it], they had to recut it and reanimate it, and it turned out to be incredibly expensive to do. That's the irony of the whole thing. I did it for a couple of pounds. The work they've done looks amazing. It's really good. They've been able to get the real essence of Python.

CDRT: There's a danger with titles like these that they become like watching TV on your computer.

Gilliam: That's right, but this isn't like that. That's what is really nice about it, and it's actually really clever. I actually wanted to call it "Monty Python's Great Waste of Time." It's one of those annoying silly things that you can spend hours on trying to work out what it's all about. And when you discover it, you realize you've wasted a great chunk of your life and can never get it back. [Laughs.]

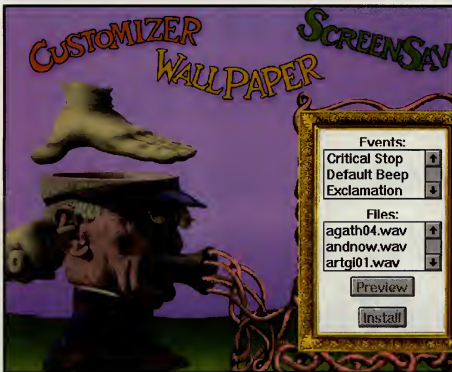
CDRT: When you think of the word "multimedia," what comes to mind for you?

Gilliam: Large profits. [Laughs again.]

— G. (D.)

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The Desktop Pythonizer - permanent Windows damage, if you like.



Inside the Exploratorium: Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition!



The Gopher Game: Silly, silly!

Game. The Pig Game is essentially a Python take on *Space Invaders*, while The Bird Game involves directing said bird around the screen with coordinated bursts of...well, flatulence. In fact, this is likely the first CD-ROM ever created with a propensity for robust, 16-bit stereo flatulence.

What will likely excite even lukewarm Python fans is The Desktop Pythonizer, a module which lets players permanently customize their Windows environment with animated Python wallpaper, screen savers, and sound effects triggered by system events. 7th Level is so high on The Pythonizer that they plan to break it out as a separate product. For dyed-in-the-wool fans, this module alone will likely prove worth the price of admission.

By all accounts, *Galactic Success* is shaping up to be another groundbreaker for 7th Level, not to mention a prolific wind breaker. This Thingie's going to be huge. Say no more. Nudge, nudge. ☺

Contact Info

7th Level 5225 San Fernando Rd. West,
Los Angeles, CA 90039 Phone: (818) 547-1955

Getting Python Interactive

How truly "Python-authentic" is this CD-ROM Thingie? To ensure a faithful translation by 7th Level, Python alumnus Terry Gilliam, whose exceedingly silly and irreverent animation graced the original show, is serving as executive producer along with 7th Level exec Bob Ezrin. Gilliam's trademark style and snappy visual touches are evident throughout the piece. "Terry Gilliam is a visual god, and we've deferred to him on the visual side," says 7th Level producer Robert Tercek.

The project almost never happened. Gilliam had been approached before about interactive titles and wasn't interested. "I wasn't excited about interactivity until I started talking to Bob [Ezrin] about this project. I thought everybody was kidding themselves." Gilliam has since changed his mind. "The nature of what Monty Python did in the anarchic fashion of our shows, coupled with 7th Level's product concept, again gives us the freedom to shock, surprise, and push comedy to the limit."

Adds Gilliam, "The Monty Python CD-ROM... is going to be great step forward for civilization, if not for all our bank balances. I've got a great deal of enthusiasm for the spirit and style of the work done so far."

Tercek notes that Terry Jones, one of the more prolific writers of the bunch, has helped in getting the tone right. In fact, "they've all been really helpful," says Tercek.

"This interactive CD-ROM Thingie will be a fully comprehensive guide to success in business, making money, dominating other people, modern architecture, market gardening and playing the trombone," says Jones. "Oh! And sex," he adds quickly.

"This is no way for a grown person to be spending their time," is Michael Palin's succinct response to the work in progress.

Now deceased Python, Graham Chapman, did not actively participate in the creation of the CD-ROM.



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life footage of those natural disasters you find so irresistible (come on, admit it...we won't tell). Unleash a killer quake. Meltdown a few nuclear power plants. Heck, wreak city-wide havoc while you're at it... just don't expect your *SimCitizens* to sit around and take it because in *this* *SimCity*, your citizens are anything but quiet. You'll make headlines on the nightly news, come face-to-face with vein-popping city officials and truly *experience* the lives you rule with each click of your mouse.

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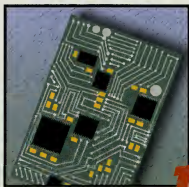
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10 STEPS TO TROUBLESHOOTING your



Multimedia is what Macs were made for. But that doesn't mean you won't hit a few snags in your quest for the ultimate Mac experience. These tips will help.

Steven Anzovin



Hardware Hints

Most Macs come multimedia-ready right out of the box. Still, you may have to crack the case to add a cache card, an accelerator board, a graphics card that offers better performance than built-in video, or a capture board for grabbing cam-corder video to make QuickTime movies.

- To install a card, shut down and

unplug the Mac. Touch a grounded metal object — your desk lamp is a good choice — to dispel the static electricity in your body. Then open the case. Cache and PDA cards fit into the shorter slots near the CPU chip; NuBus slots are 7 or 9 inches long and align with an opening in the case. If there is more than one NuBus slot, install your display card in the leftmost (number 1) slot.

- NuBus cards come in two sizes, 7-inch and 9-inch. Some Mac models (e.g., the Quadra 605, 610, and Power Macintosh 6100) accept only the shorter 7-inch NuBus cards.

If you hear the “sick Mac” noise on startup after installing a card, or your Mac crashes at some point soon after startup:

- Shut down and press the card firmly into its slot, then restart.
- If that doesn't work, look for conflicts between the card's software driver and other extensions (see next page).

Multimedia Macintosh



ADB Aggravations

Keyboards, mice, joysticks, and other input devices attach to your Mac via the ADB (Apple Desktop Bus). The ADB is tetchy and can cause a variety of problems.

- Don't unplug ADB (Apple Desktop Bus) devices — keyboard, mouse, etc. —

while your Mac is running. That may fry the ADB controller chip.

- You can have only three devices on the ADB chain. Use the second ADB port found in the back of most Macs for additional devices.

If the pointer is frozen:

- Shut down and check the ADB cables. Are they pushed in all the way? The keyboard-to-mouse cable takes a lot of stress and is especially likely to work loose.

- Clean your mouse. Twist off the bottom ring and wipe out the inside and the ball with a foam swab dipped in rubbing alcohol.

- Check for extension conflicts (see #7).



Memory Crunch

Insufficient memory (RAM) is probably the most common reason Mac owners have trouble with multimedia.

Inexplicably, most Macs today ship with 4 megabytes of RAM, while many multimedia CD-ROMs require at least 5 megabytes. Even with 5 megs, you'll suffer daily low-memory messages at best and daily crashes at worst.

Installing more memory is the obvious fix. But if you're stuck with minimal RAM, here's some tips for getting the most from it.

- Virtual memory might seem to be the answer, but it doesn't coexist well with graphics applications and games. Turn it off from the Memory control panel.

- Choose "About This Macintosh" in the Apple menu when you're in the Finder to see what other programs are running and how much memory they use. Close programs you aren't using.

- Decrease the size of your System software. Delete file-sharing extensions, if you don't need them, and throw away any screen fonts you aren't currently using. Then restart to release the RAM you've freed up.

- Opening and closing programs tends to break memory into chunks which sometimes become unavailable. If you're getting low memory messages, but you're sure you have enough memory, close all programs and restart to defragment your RAM.



SCSI SNAFUs

Mass-storage devices such as hard drives and CD-ROMs can be daisy-chained to your Mac via the SCSI (Small Computer System Interface) port. Standard SCSI supports up to seven devices, each with its own unique address, from 0 to 6. Your internal hard drive is assigned SCSI address 0 at the factory. Addresses for external CD-ROM drives and other devices are set with a thumbwheel on the case.

SCSI problems can arise if two devices on the SCSI chain have the same address number. This will bring down your Mac at startup or cause frequent disk errors. Solution: check the addresses of all SCSI devices and make sure they're different. A system diagnosis program will make things easier by scanning your Mac and reporting all SCSI addresses.

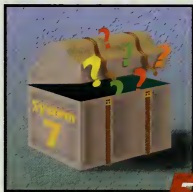
Another SCSI headache stems from the fact that the last device in the SCSI chain must be properly ter-

minated. SCSI devices may be internally terminated — your Mac has internal termination, for example, meaning you don't have to do anything to terminate it yourself — or externally terminated with a SCSI terminator (a kind of dummy SCSI plug).

Most Mac CD-ROM drives require an external terminator if they are the last device in the SCSI chain. Push the terminator onto the drive's empty SCSI port.

Two SCSI tips to keep in mind:

- Use a power strip to turn on all SCSI devices and your Mac at once. SCSI drives must be powered up at startup time or your Mac won't recognize them.
- Don't turn off SCSI devices while your Mac is running. Shut your Mac down first.



System 7 Secrets

If you haven't upgraded to System 7 yet, the time has come. Most bugs have been ironed out and all future software releases will be compatible with it, which can't be said about System 6.0x.

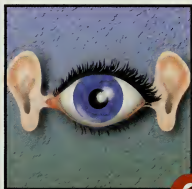
If you're running System 7.1, the latest release at the time of this writing, obtain the free System 7.1 Tune-up from Apple. It fixes some remaining bugs and compatibility problems.

• The best way to avoid software compatibility problems with System 7 is to upgrade all your important software to the latest versions.

- If you're having trouble running

an older program in System 7, turn off 32-bit addressing in the Memory control panel. That will limit you to 8 megabytes of RAM, but your program may run.

• Make sure you don't have two System folders on your startup disk. This is the all-time best way to turn your Mac into a schizo beast. If you do, boot from your System floppies or CD-ROM and delete the extra System folder.



Sound & Vision

Macintosh sound and video are usually hassle-free, but there are a few troubleshooting points to note.

• For best performance, set your monitor to 256 colors for multimedia and games. QuickTime movies look best at thousands of colors. Set multi-resolution monitors to the standard resolution for the monitor size: 640 x 480 for 13-inch screens, for example.

If you can't view images in thousands or millions of colors:

• Do you have enough video RAM (VRAM)? You need at least 1 megabyte of VRAM to display thousands or millions of colors on 13- to 16-inch monitors. Upgrade your VRAM, if necessary.

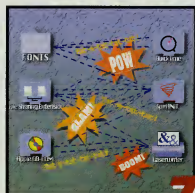
If you can't hear CD-ROM audio:

• Adjust the volume control on the drive or in Sound Manager. If the program you're running has its own volume control, adjust that.

• Are all cables plugged into the proper jacks? Make sure Line In isn't in Line Out, and vice versa.

• Remember that audio CDs don't play through the sound system of most Macs. Listen to them with headphones

attached to your CD-ROM drive or through amplified speakers attached to the drive's line jacks.



Extension Wars

Mac owners don't have to fool with dip switches and IRQs the way PC owners do, but they do have to cope with a major software headache of their own: incompatible extensions. Those little programs that load at startup are as likely to war among themselves as are some Balkan states. Extension conflicts are the most common cause of weird, unexplained Mac crashes.

If you've just installed a new extension and start having problems, the immediate culprit is obvious. Why the problem exists may be harder to pin down. Is it a conflict with another extension, or with the System?

Try this technique for isolating extension offenders:

• Restart your Mac and hold down the Shift key until the "Welcome to Macintosh" box appears. This turns off all extensions. The desktop should appear as it usually does.

• Open the Extensions folder in your System folder. Drag half of the extensions onto the desktop (Don't include printer fonts, if you have any in there.).

• Restart your Mac, but don't hold down the Shift key. If the problem persists, you know that the offending extensions are still in the Extensions folder. If not, the offenders are now on the desktop. Keep dividing the "problem" group and restarting until you've

zeroed in on the culprits.

A better solution is to get an extensions management program (included in many utilities packages). Apple distributes a freeware version called "Extension Manager." With an extensions management program, you can turn extensions on and off at will, making it easier to test for incompatibilities. You can also change the order in which extensions load, often a cause of trouble.



Drivers, He Said

Without the proper software drivers and system extensions, your Mac won't recognize your CD-ROM drive or let you read many kinds of disks. If you're having trouble mounting disks, you may be missing one or more of the extension files listed below. Note that each of these files should be on the disks that came with your hardware. These files are also found on any number of utility disks commonly available.

- The CD-ROM hardware driver for your make of drive, or commercial driver from a CD-ROM utilities package. You won't be able to access the drive at all without this one.
- Apple Photo Access, so you can read PhotoCD disks and files.
- Audio CD Access, so you can play audio CDs on your drive. You'll also need a CD-playing desk accessory such as Music Box.
- Foreign File Access, for accessing various kinds of non-Mac files.
- High Sierra File Access, for recognizing one of the two main types of CD-ROM files.

• ISO 9660 File Access, for accessing the other main type of CD-ROM file.

• QuickTime. Version 2.0 is the latest and by far the best; it will provide faster, better-looking playback for any QuickTime movie.

• Sound Manager. Version 3.0 allows better sound recording through your Mac's microphone and handles QuickTime sound synchronization better, too.

Drag missing or corrupted drivers and extensions from the original installation disks onto your System folder. They will install automatically in the proper folders. Then restart your Mac to open them.



Common CD-ROM Headaches

If the text from a CD-ROM doesn't appear properly on the screen:

• Some discs require that you install special screen fonts in your System. Drag the font suitcase over the System folder icon and it will install itself.

If a CD-ROM runs slower than expected:

• Are you in single-speed or double-speed mode? Switch to double speed. You can do this from your CD-ROM Control Panel.

• Check the number of display colors in the Monitors control panel. The more colors, the slower the screen redraws. Reduce the number of colors to the minimum required by the CD-ROM.

• Turn off virtual memory in Memory under Control Panels.

If the icon for a particular disc doesn't appear on the desktop:

- Make sure it's a Mac disc.
- Clean it and try again.
- Try it in another caddy.
- Load a different disc to check that your drive is working properly.
- Make sure you have all the proper extensions installed.
- If all these fail, the disc itself is probably bad.

If you can't eject a disk:
• Make sure all applications except the Finder are closed, then try again.

• If that doesn't work, then restart; the disc will eject during shutdown.



Last-Minute Hints

Many Mac CD-ROMs are based on HyperCard. If the menu bar is hidden in these programs, you can make it appear by pressing Command-spacebar. Stop HyperCard scripts in progress by pressing Command-period.

Most multimedia applications and games run better if you allocate more memory to them. Close the program, select its icon in the Finder and choose Get Info from the File menu. Under System 7.1, you can set the application's RAM partition by typing a higher number into the "Preferred Size" box.

You can't beat the multimedia experience on a smooth-running Mac.

Steve Anzovin is a free-lance writer based in Andover, Massachusetts. He is the author of Macintosh Desktop Presentations and Exploring Hypercard, both published by Computer Books. Steve can be reached by email at the following address: anzovin@aol.com.

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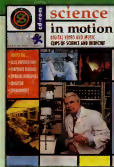
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— General Dwight D. Eisenhower



The anniversary of D-Day is remembered by millions this year, and CD-ROM users have their own special access to revisiting one of history's most important events. Here are four CD-ROMs that each bring a unique approach to the subject.

The above press release, scrawled by Eisenhower after okaying June 6 as D-Day, provides a glimpse of the torment in his mind over the massive responsibility he bore. It was to be released in the event that Operation Overlord was a failure. Sending thousands of men across the English Channel to Normandy, choosing the time and day, was only half of the battle. Sitting back and waiting — waiting to

T. Liam McDonald

see if D-Day was a failure — was one of the most difficult challenges Eisenhower faced, and his lingering doubt is clear from the fact that he carried this press release for another month, just in case.

It was an operation that seemed almost too large to succeed. The logistical burden of coordinating so many thousands of men, ships, and aircraft in

an amphibious assault on Hitler's Fortress Europe was massive. There's a reason why we just commemorated the 50th anniversary of D-Day: not only was it the largest operation of its type ever, but also spelled the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany's Thousand Year Reich. That day, 155,000 men stormed the beaches known as Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword, and some 2500 died. And, within a year, Hitler would be



Normandy: The Great Crusade is primarily a documentary on CD, so its interactive features are limited to few menus such as this.

Normandy:
The
Invasions
of France
includes
dozens of
captioned
photos, all
searchable.

**...as well
as army
maps and
aerial
recon
photos...**

...and 17 minutes of video.

views, and reference. The "multimedia" elements are a half dozen sound bites — including Eisenhower, Roosevelt, and the first radio broadcast announcing the landings — and two large video clips (running about 17 minutes total): somewhat less than that in the other products. There are, however,

countless stills, all of which are searchable.

The core of this product is text, not multimedia. There are interviews, eyewitness accounts, army reports, lists of codewords, a glossary, detailed accounts of all the medal of honor winners, many army-issue maps, a complete chronology.



Though lacking depth, Normandy: The Great Crusade has impressive visual design and narrative power.

and much more. There is basically a book shelf full of D-Day data here, a searchable using a rudimentary but effective front end. *The Invasions of France* is the war buff's CD-ROM.

T. Liam McDonald is a free-lance writer based in Somerset, New Jersey. He is currently writing books on Harpoon II and 7th Guest/11th Hour for Sybex Books.

June 6, 44

Appropriately, the French are also marking the liberation of their country with a CD-ROM from Paradise Software, available domestically in an English/French version distributed by UBIO Multimedia.



June 6, 44, a product from France, is built around a single menu with numerous icons to access multimedia elements.

June 6, 44 is based around a single screen with icons for each aspect of the multimedia presentation. The screen is dominated by a map image, which can be animated by clicks on a clock icon, advancing the time throughout the day of the landings and beyond. Dragging an icon over the map or over another icon brings up lists of various elements. Satellite picture of the locations, still photos, and portraits of the major leaders are all accessible from different icons. Numerous video clips, radio broadcasts, and narrations are also available, as well as a wealth of text, sound effects, and description of various units, weapons, planes, ships, and other items of interest.

Info

- * *The Simon & Schuster D-Day cyclopedia* (Windows, \$79.95) con.txt.systems, inc., The Technology Center, 2935 Byberry Rd., Haddonfield, PA 19040 Phone: (215) 675-5000
- * *Normandy: The Invasion of France* (Windows, \$69.95) Quanta Press, 1313 Fifth St. SE, Suite 208C, Minneapolis, MN 55414 Phone: (612) 379-3956
- * *Normandy: The Great Crusade* (Windows, \$49.95) Discovery Enterprises, 7700 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, MD 20814 Phone: (301) 986-0444
- * *June 6, 44 Paradise Software*, 185 Berry St., Suite 5514, San Francisco, CA 94107 (Windows) Phone: (415) 896-0708

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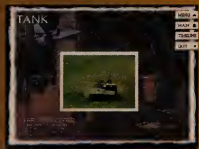


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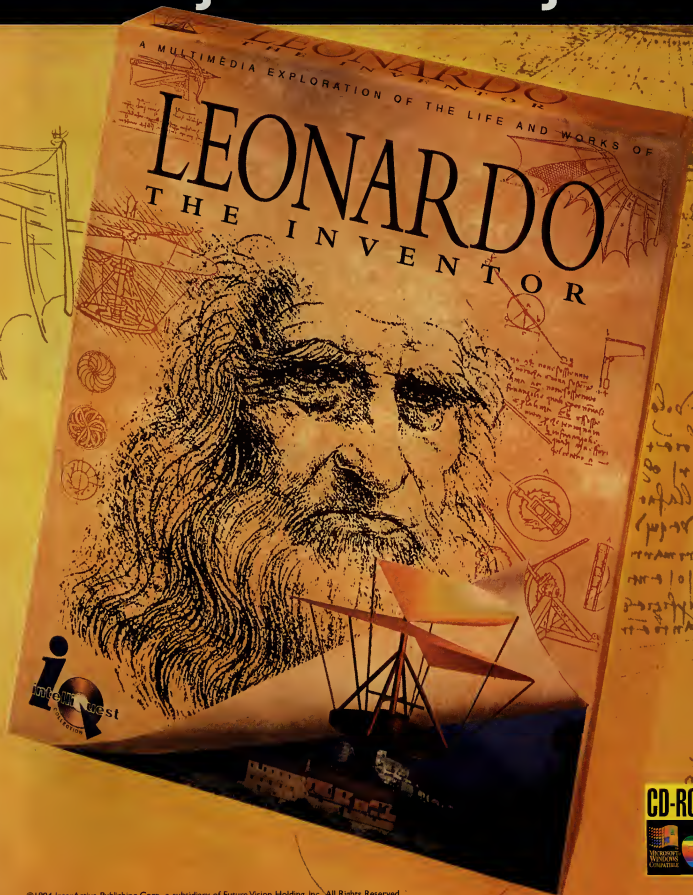
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ed teach your kids a thing or two.



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Product Information Number 193



We all know about the problems with cars: they consume energy and pollute, they're more dangerous than any form of mass transit, and they require expensive highways that gobble up public funds and blight the



The list of car manufacturers in Auto Almanac groups car brands under the names of their parent corporations.

landscape. But none of these drawbacks has dimmed the flame of America's love affair with the automobile, and it was only a matter of time before the car made its way as a topic onto CD-ROM. If you're a fan, here are three discs you

The World of Cars on CD-ROM

If you're an automobile aficionado, here are three CD-ROMs you might want to test drive.

Tim Victor

should know about.

CE3's 1994 Auto Almanac and ARC Media's Automobile Registry '94 (\$59.95) are guides to current new car models, with reviews, photos, and specifications for the hundreds of cars offered for sale this year. (1995 versions will be available in the late fall.) Of the two, *Auto Almanac* (\$49.95, DOS, Windows, or

Mac) offers more detailed descriptions and specs, and its DOS-based front end allows head-to-head comparisons of different models. Cars can be selected by maker, by category, or by specification, but the interface has some logistical problems. For instance, in the list of car makers, subsidiary brands are unwisely grouped under the names of their parent corporations. Of course, true car nuts know that Infiniti will be listed under Nissan, and that Audi is a part of Volkswagen while Porsche isn't anymore; but for ordinary mortals, simple alpha-

ALPHABETICALLY BY MAKE			
Performance Rating	Porsche 911 "C"	Make 10-9 1 10	
Interior Noise Rating	1	10	1
Exterior Noise Rating	10	1	10
Engine & Driveline Rating	10	1	10
Transmission Rating	1	1	1
Tyre Noise Rating	1	1	1
Side-Skidding Rating	1	1	1
Cornering Stability Rating	1	1	1
Braking Rating	1	1	1
Engine Power Rating	1	1	1
Handling Rating	1	1	1
Power to Weight Ratio	11.3	11.3	11.3
Weight (kilograms)	1100	1100	1100
0-60 (sec)	11.0	11.0	11.0
Top Speed (mph)	110	110	110

ARC: 1994 Auto Almanac, Now, Ltd. to Beate - 10 to 10

Performance information is derived from government specifications. Make, top speed and engine time statistics are based on EPA performance ratings. All other statistics are based on manufacturer's data.

Competing models go head-to-head in Auto Almanac's comparison screen.



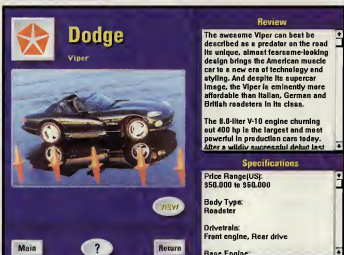
Automobile Registry's top menu shows badges for all U.S.-market brands. It also lists mystery marquee Dax and Donkervoort, but omits major European makers like Opel and Citroën.

betical order would make more sense. The category lists are also poorly organized, using the EPA's often puzzling classifications. Thus, supercars like the Acura NSX and the Ferrari 348 show up with the smallest econoboxes in the "minicompact" list.

While *Auto Almanac* uses pure text displays for all its data screens, switching into graphics mode only to display photos, *Automobile Registry* is a more modern-looking graphical presentation. This

hybrid Windows/Mac CD-ROM runs entirely from the disc, staking a claim to only 2MB of your hard drive during installation. The simple point-and-click design makes it easy to find any car, but once you're there, the Registry's specs and reviews are rather low on factual content. It also suffers from some unfortunate omissions — don't expect to say hello to the Dodge Neon here.

Driving is about action and motion,



Behind the buttons are reviews, specs, and pictures of each model, with the spectacular Dodge Viper shown here.

but these titles move very slowly, hampered by long disc-access delays and static content. Neither disc has any behind-the-wheel driving impressions, and the photos are almost all exterior shots of stationary cars, with few dashboards, engines, or suspensions to be seen.

Factual issues aside, both discs post very low excitement quotients.

In comparison, MPI's *Cars! Cars! Cars!* (\$79.98, separate Windows and Mac versions available) has plenty of motion. It's a collection of movie clips drawn from the giant WPA film archive, all having something to do with cars. There are cars on the road and cars on the race track; cars being built and cars being destroyed; new cars, old cars, and cars of the future that never were. But only about half of the

clips have any kind of soundtrack, and at 180 x 120 pixels and 15 frames per second, the clips don't exactly push the limits of software video quality.

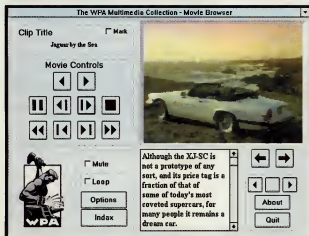
With no unifying narrative to tie the video bites together, the disc is somewhat disjointed, but many of the clips are quite entertaining on their own. While its appeal might be limited, *Cars! Cars! Cars!* could be a rich resource for people building their own multimedia presentations. ☺



The legendary Amphicar takes to the water and motors away in *Cars! Cars! Cars!*



Cars! Cars! Cars! Includes Groucho Marx demonstrating DeSoto's amazing full-power steering in this commercial.



Cars! Cars! Cars! includes a simple browser which describes and displays each video clip.

Info

- ABC Media 4400C Enterprise St., Fremont, CA 94538 (510) 683-8855
- CES 3134 Pacific Coast Hwy., Suite 216, Torrance, CA 90505 (310) 534-8112
- MPI Multimedia 3525 W. 199th St., Oak Forest IL 60452 (708) 535-1540

REVIEWS

The Complete Maus

Mac \$59.95

The Voyager Company 578 Broadway, Suite 406, New York, NY 10012 Phone: (212) 431-5199

REFERENCE

Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* has been hailed as the definitive imaginative work on the Holocaust, the destruction of six-million European Jews by the



Cover art for The Complete Maus

Nazis during World War II. I'd give that vote not to the Spielberg film, but to the CD-ROM version of Art Spiegelman's comic masterpiece, *The Complete Maus*.

A well-known comic artist and the co-founder of *RAW* magazine, Spiegelman takes a staple of popular culture — the mouse and cat cartoon — and uses it to tell the true story of his troubled relationship with his father, Vladek, a survivor of the Nazi death camps. *Maus* may look like a cartoon, but it's far from being a Tom and Jerry version of the Holocaust. True, Spiegelman portrays Jews as mice — a leap of imagination amply supported by Nazi writings of the era, which compared Jews to household vermin fit only

for extermination — while Germans are portrayed as sadistic cats, Poles as pigs, and Americans as dogs. But he manages in *Maus* to evoke the horrors of the Holocaust in a way that the Spielberg film does not, despite — or perhaps because of — the fact that his characters are animals. ("Some things are too profane to show directly," Spiegelman says in an interview on the disc.)

Maus is emotionally complex and aesthetically challenging. As the story bounces back and forth between Spiegelman's confused present in the Catskills and New York, and his father's hellish past in wartime Poland, it confronts head-on the lasting effects of terror and guilt. (*Maus* contains brutal images that are inappropriate for small children.) Vladek's suffering is made more believable by the many

prosaic details Spiegelman uses to anchor his story. There are detailed diagrams of how to build a hiding place from the SS, how to repair a storm-trooper's boot, and how the gas chambers and ovens in Auschwitz worked.

Nor does Spiegelman buy the myth that suffering somehow ennobles its victims (a view he says ruined the Spielberg film for him). Vladek may be a survivor, but he is also difficult, demanding, and devious. His experiences in Auschwitz dominate everything he says and does. The son, who knows of the camps only second hand, is alienated by his father's obsessions. The interviews between Art and Vladek (on which *Maus* is based) seem to be all that holds them together.

Spiegelman, for his part, struggles to grasp the reality of the Holocaust and despairs of doing it justice in comic book form. In one scene he shows his characters as humans wearing mouse masks; he fears we will forget that behind the mice in *Maus* are real human beings. In the same scene he reveals his guilt at making money off the suffering of millions: Perched on a heap of emaciated corpses, he turns into a child crying for his mother as reporters pester him for



Spiegelman's mouse counterpart grapples with the difficulty of portraying the Holocaust in a comic book.

statements on the meaning of the Holocaust and entrepreneurs try to commercialize his work.

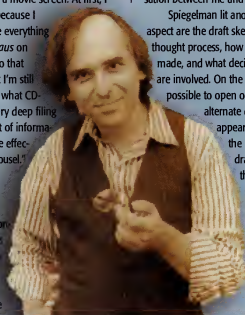
Whatever Spiegelman's personal misgivings, *Maus* stands at the pinnacle of comic art. *Maus* is drawn in a decep-

Spiegelman on CD-ROM and *The Complete Maus*

Art Spiegelman dislikes interviews, but I had the chance to speak to him recently during a talk he was giving to an enthusiastic college audience. During a break in which students labored to fix a slide projector, Spiegelman took questions while starting on what seemed to be his second pack of cigarettes that evening.

Earlier, Spiegelman said he'd turned down several offers to make *Maus* into a movie or television show. "Movies are too linear, too literal," Spiegelman said. "I couldn't preserve the look of *Maus* on a movie screen. At first, I turned to CD-ROM because I thought I could store everything having to do with *Maus* on one disc. We can't do that yet, so I learned. But I'm still very impressed with what CD-ROM is...a kind of very deep filing cabinet. It holds a lot of information—certainly more effectively than a slide carousel." That earned a laugh from the audience.

"Yes, there are compromises," he continued. "I drew *Maus* in a one-to-one ratio. What you see in the book is a very close approximation of the



original marks I made, in the size I made them. The marks on the screen are somewhat larger. And of course, the page is vertical, but the computer screen is horizontal. That isn't ideal."

"In exchange for the compromises," he said, "I was able to make available material that is very important to me, that enriches the story. On the CD, you can hear several hours of Vladek's voice. To be able to hear on tape his direct recollection is very interesting. It prevents *Maus* from being so much a one-sided conversation between me and the reader."

Spiegelman lit another cigarette. "Another aspect are the draft sketches. They show the thought process, how the pictures were made, and what decisions and implications are involved. On the *Maus* CD-ROM, it is possible to open out preliminary sketches, alternate drafts, pages that never appeared anywhere, to see the photographic and drawn reference material that led to the pages, to see how scenes were constructed and reconstructed. All that became possible. I thought that was making something worthwhile available."

—S.A.

tively simple, even crude graphic style reminiscent of labor-newspaper strips of the 1930s and '40s. In fact,

Spiegelman's panels are tightly composed and exploit every convention of the comic idiom. Yet Spiegelman's obsession with alternative narrative forms (like multi-threaded, nonlinear storytelling) does not overwhelm his ability to convey the emotions of his animal characters eloquently.

Voyager's CD-ROM version of *The Complete Maus* is the definitive edition

of this classic. It contains the entire text and graphics of the two *Maus* books, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History*, and *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began*.

Supplementing the text is a mountain of preliminary sketches, each sketch keyed to the final panel. These sketches give you an intimate look at how Spiegelman distilled the images in *Maus*, showing just how much work went into each "simple" panel.

Also included is a wealth of multimedia material: audio recorded during Spiegelman's interviews with Vladek; Spiegelman family photos; and QuickTime movies of two research



Preliminary sketches are available for most panels, providing a glimpse into the artist's creative process.

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS

All reviews in **CD-ROM Today** are rated with an easy-to-understand five-point system:

★★★★★ = outstanding

★★★★ = a cut above


★★★ = adequate

★★ = deficient

★ = very poor

N/A = not applicable

Many of the titles covered in our Reviews section include an appearance on **theDisc!**

Look for this graphic  at the top of the review to see what's on **theDisc!** bundled with this issue.

trips Spiegelman made to Poland. In addition, drawings of the camps made by other prisoners and other documentary material are linked to related pages. An introduction features movies and audio of Spiegelman explaining the disc's background. Rounding out the disc is a selection of articles and audio interviews by and about Spiegelman and *Maus*.

The disc's only real shortcoming is that at the normal page size you have to scroll down to see the bottom panels (unless you're lucky enough to have a 19-inch monitor). That lessens the impact of Spiegelman's careful compositions. You can shrink the view to see the whole page on smaller monitors, but it will be so small that you probably won't be able to read the text or see fine details. And, because the pages are so large, it takes a long time to flip from one to the next. You'll be happier running this disc on a 2X or 3X drive. But don't let a slow drive or a small screen prevent you from viewing *The Complete Maus*. It is an experience you won't forget.

—Steve Anzovin

Depth of Information: Visuals:

★★★★★

Interface:

★★★★

Audio:

★★★★

Overall: ★★★★★

Gettysburg: Multimedia Battle Simulation

Windows \$69.95

This battle simulation by way of historical reference offers a quite decent and detailed exploration of the three days in July, 1863, that turned the tide of the Civil War (or, since we're

material drawn from the Turner film, and audio (narrative) courtesy of Civil War historian and writer Shelby Foote. The video clips are appropriate but short, varying approximately 15-30 sec-



Above: video from Turner's *Gettysburg* film is available throughout, with several outtakes included. **Top right:** you can opt to run your simulation on an antique map (see opposite page to view terrain map). **Center right:** click on any unit in the field, and a screen with historical information and current unit battle data pops up. **Bottom right:** at the start, you get a historical overview of Union and Confederate army movements in 1863, leading up to the confrontation at Gettysburg.

writing from North Carolina, the War Between the States).

Originally released by Swfte on disk as a battle simulation, *Gettysburg* moved to CD-ROM with the assistance of Turner Interactive, who added audio, video, and historical data. The resulting product is a day-by-day, unit-by-unit treatment of the battle, with background

onds, and most users will probably view them only a few times. An animated map, titled *Strategic Situation*, sets the stage for the convergence of the armies in south central Pennsylvania; and the clips on Civil War Artillery and Civil War Rifles provide good background information, explaining differences in the various arms and ammunition used

in the battle and the war (smoothbores, solid shot, shell, grapeshot, etc.). A reading of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Lee's farewell speech are also included.

The meat of the product is in the simulation. Here you have dozens of combinations of choices which can be changed at any time during play. You can opt for Historical Play (all troops move exactly as they did during the battle) or Free Play (command either or both sides). You can select a terrain or



The simulation action follows the battle if you opt for historical play. Here, newly arriving Union cavalry under Buford clashes with Confederate infantry at the head of Lee's army.



Lee tries the Union left flank, where action is heavy in the Wheat Field, Peach Orchard, Devil's Den, and Little Round Top. Note the famous Union fish hook formation.



The high-water mark of the Confederacy. Pickett's charge reaches the Union center, where fighting is close and furious.

antique map; speed of play (slow, medium, fast, or turbo); take command at the brigade, division, or corps level; view or listen to field notes (describing which units are involved at each stage of battle); auto-history notes and battle summary; casualty display per unit, high-lighted combat zones, unit strength meters, and more.

Gettysburg has enough flexibility in user choices to appeal to many interest levels. For example, historical newcomers could select the Terrain display, activate field notes, and let the computer command both sides with Historical Play. With this setup, you can view the battle as it unfolded in 15-minute increments. Civil War buffs can control either side or both armies, thereby trying to effect a different result or at least a different character of battle. You could, for example, let the battle unfold historically for the first two days, then jump in and attempt to alter the outcome, perhaps sparing Pickett, Armistead, and the other noble Virginians. All players should first read Getting Started (in the Help menu), which explains the simulation's parameters and play mechanics, as well as Battle Strategies for background and advice.

If there's one drawback, it's in the graphic clutter of units at the brigade level, at least when the fighting is close. It's difficult to differentiate one unit from another, but probably no more confusing than witnessing the battle when real troops were face to face.

When controlling units, you can move each where you wish and also issue individual commands to engage, stop, entrench, rest, aim, attack at long range or close range, and so on. Since each battle unit is discrete, you can also click on its icon and quickly view another screen that shows its commander (with historical portrait), strength, casualties, morale, etc. At this level of detail, you can play the simulation for many, many hours.

Whether you're a true buff or newly interested in the Civil War or Gettysburg, this disc is recommended. The video excerpts from Gettysburg, the movie, and, in particular, the narration of Shelby Foote lend a great deal to the authentic feel of this product.

— Lance Elko



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C.O.D.

Job-Power Source

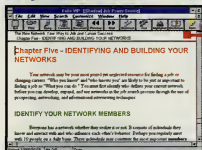
Windows \$49.95

InfoBusiness 887 South Orem Blvd., Orem, UT 84058-5009 Phone: (801) 221-1100

The first several CD-ROM titles from InfoBusiness emphasized providing in-depth information on topics ranging from movies to federal government data and programs. Nowhere is this approach more welcome than in presenting job-search ideas and techniques, as in the company's newest release, *Job-Power Source: Job-Finding Skills for the '90s*.



Begin your investigation by searching through these books.

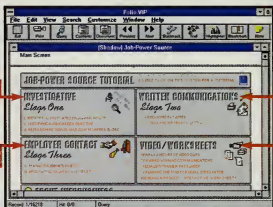


Networking to help find and get a job is but one of the techniques you can explore here.

Anyone who has spent time researching job-prospect trends, interviewing and resumé techniques, alternate career paths, and similar topics, knows that the amount of material available is overwhelming. There are thousands of books, audio tapes, videos, seminars, conferences, and individual counselors from which to choose. The problem, then, is to marshal sufficient time and resources to select the most appropriate information.

For those interested in getting a new or first job, changing careers, brushing up

on job-search techniques, and the like, *Job-Power Source* is a gold mine of targeted information. There are more than a dozen career-guidance and job-information books on the CD, almost two hours of job-search video featuring communications specialist Pat Sladey, occupational information on more than 200 career areas, more than 200 sample resumé and job-search letters, and a collection of interactive "worksheets" that test your competencies and knowl-



The main interface offers investigation, writing, and contact techniques, as well as access to the instructional videos.

edge in a number of areas.

All of this is fronted by a very smooth user interface and accessed through a powerful "query" engine that permits boolean searches with as simple or as complex an approach as the user wishes. There's also an excellent tutorial that walks you through the disc's structure. And you can use online "bookmarks," personal notes, and "highlighters" to personalize and pull together your searches.

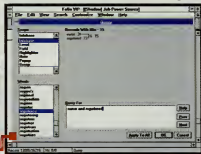
Included on the disc is the huge *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, which offers information on the prospects for various occupations. For beginners or career changers, this alone is a valuable and fascinating resource.

But perhaps even more compelling

is the wealth of information on the best techniques and approaches in today's job-market search. From creating resumes and letters that get results to finding the hidden job market and going through interviews, *Job-Power Source* has a tremendous amount of information.

As Sladey points out in one of her videos, the first priority is not who's the best skilled at doing a particular job, it's initially who's the best skilled at getting a particular job.

There's a tremendous amount that this CD-ROM has to offer. If there's a caveat, it's that the "query" engine takes some getting used to if you're not familiar with some boolean-search concepts as



Use the "query" engine to search for almost any topic or group of topics.



Almost two hours of video features counselor Pat Sladey.

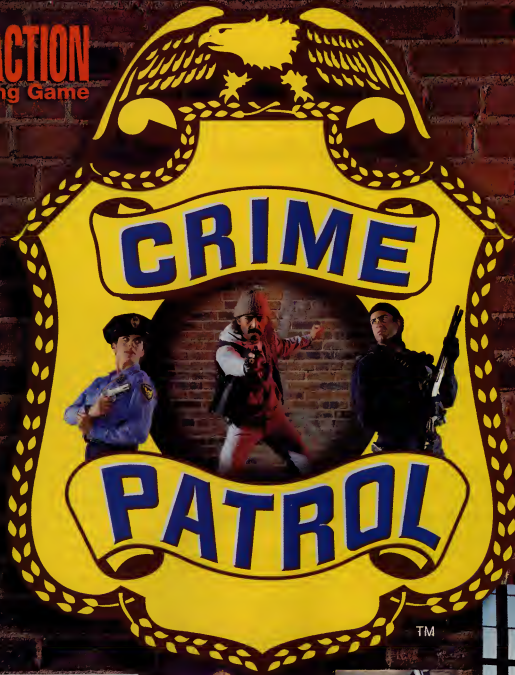
and, or, and not queries. There is, however, online help and a short, but succinct manual to help you through.

Job-Power Source is the kind of focused multimedia-library-on-a-disc that shows just how CD-ROM reference discs can be such wonderful tools.

— Selby Bateman



LIVE ACTION
MOTION PICTURE
CD Shooting Game



TM



This Multi-level live-action thriller challenges the player to progress through police ranks, battling a variety of criminal elements. As a Rookie the player takes on gang members, armed robbers and other street criminals. Promotion to Detective will mean working undercover against drug dealers and car thief rings. Be prepared to confront bank robbers and terrorists once you're selected for SWAT team assignment. Only the better player will be able to reach Delta Force and tangle with a criminal element threatening national security.

GAME SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: PC CD-ROM • IBM PC 386 sx 25 MHz or compatible recommended • 640K Ram with VGA • Mouse (100% Microsoft Compatible) • CD-ROM Drive (150 KB per second or greater, continuous read, 380 ms seek, double speed drive provides better graphic quality) • Sound Blaster or 100% compatible card • DOS 3.3 or higher

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AMERICAN
LASER GAMES

Product Information Number 195

4801 Lincoln Road NE • Albuquerque, N.M. 87109
1-800-580-1718

Jonathan Pond's Personal Financial Planner

Windows \$69.95

Vertigo Development Group 58 Charles St., Cambridge, MA 02141 Phone: (617) 225-2065

There are myriad ways to learn about financial planning, but many of them are a.) boring, b.) confusing, c.) expensive, or d.) all of the above. *Jonathan Pond's Personal Financial Planner*, a Vertigo ActiveBook, is none of the above. What you'll spend for this product wouldn't cover an hour of a financial professional's time, or a financial-planning seminar, but it'll buy you comprehensible information, a personally tailored strategy, and tons of helpful planning tips. You can explore topics like reducing debts and taxes, preparing for

expert advice on your current situation and how you might improve it. Pond, a respected authority on finances, injects his personal humor and wisdom throughout the program, taking some of the sting out of what is for most of us a fairly painful process.

This product is far more than a book slapped on CD-ROM. With more than 20 minutes of video clips, many questionnaires, and brief, topical comments ("Jonathan Says") on nearly every page, it's interactive in a big way.

The interface is similar to other

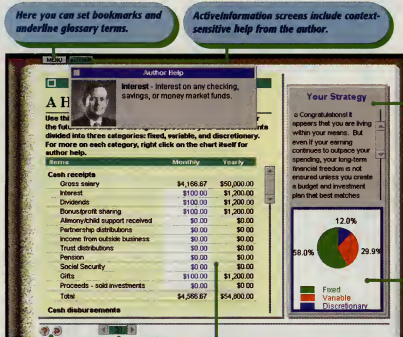
While it's possible to simply read Pond's text without interacting, you'll miss the program's power if you do. If you follow the suggested path, answering questionnaires and taking short quizzes, your route will be mapped out for you, and you'll get constant feedback. For example, early on in the program, you can take the Wealth Test by answering a series of questions. At the end, Pond offers an evaluation of your financial situation and plots a customized reading plan that helps you maximize the effectiveness of your time with the program.

Other questionnaires — and resulting evaluations and advice — cover topics like insurance, budget, and net worth. Once you've entered financial data and answered questions in these ActiveInformation pages, Pond further hones your reading strategy, and suggests actions you can take, as well as additional resources outside the program. As you go, Pond is compiling a customized SmartPlanner report that offers personalized financial suggestions.

Though there's little that's difficult about using the program, help is always nearby. You can click the question-mark icon for program help, and click on the Author menu on ActiveInformation pages to get clarification on any question. Clicking the right mouse button on any item pops up a picture of Pond and context-sensitive help. Pond's comments here, too, are often humorous, reminiscent of the personality that Andrew Tobias injects into *MECA's Managing Your Money*.

Jonathan Pond's Personal Financial Planner offers a pleasant, painless way to tackle a decidedly unpleasant and painful task: financial assessment and planning. Pond motivates you to think seriously about your present and future financial status, and gives you the tools to make some serious plans.

— Kathy Yakal



Here you can set bookmarks and underline glossary terms.

ActiveInformation screens include context-sensitive help from the author.

Answer queries in an Active Information screen and you get analysis and suggested strategies.

Graphics make things clear in an instant.

Navigational and help icons are available at all times.

Fill in all blanks — you'll get a better overall assessment.

retirement or a child's college education, and making sure that your insurance coverage is adequate.

Rather than wrestling with a spreadsheet, you'll be asked simple questions about your personal finances, and given

book-based projects: click on icons or move slide bars to navigate and to scroll text. Drop-down menus let you insert bookmarks and margin notes, search for a term in the index, undo actions, or retrace your steps.



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Product Information Number 175

Sports Illustrated 1994 Multimedia Sports Almanac

Windows/Mac \$59.95

StarPress Multimedia 303 Sacramento St., 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94111 Phone: (415) 274-8383

The world's mightiest sports mag turns 40 this year. Instead of taking time out, though, *Sports Illustrated* has lent its considerable muscle to StarPress Multimedia's *Sports Illustrated 1994 Multimedia Sports Almanac*. Fortunately for sports fans, *Sports Illustrated* contributed more to the project than its name.

The *SI Sports Almanac* covers the '93 sports year from November '92 to

November '93. It's crammed with enough trivia to settle any barroom bet, and enough stats to keep any number cruncher happy. Furthermore, it positively blows away any text-based reference work. After all, what other sports almanac can supply you with the year's significant numbers, then show you footage of the year's highlights? *SI Sports Almanac* can and does, spectacularly.

Predictably, the major sports (pro/college football, baseball, pro/college basketball, and hockey) garner the most attention. Each is covered in varying concentrations, so the viewer can choose the type and amount of coverage that suits them.

The interface in *SI Sports Almanac* looks swell and contains a handy History menu that keeps track of past selections so you can reaccess them quickly. The program runs beautifully, whether you're using a Mac or Windows (versions for both are on the same disc).

One of the best things about *SI Sports Almanac* is that it's actually a *Sports Illustrated* product, not just a disc stamped with their endorsement. More than 350 *SI* feature articles are included, giving you an ideal opportunity to catch up on the strongest sports prose around.

Sports action rushes you from all directions in this CD-ROM, and it's all conveyed with the same authority and easy access that ensures *SI*'s dominance as a magazine.

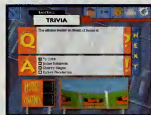
—Phil Powell



The Team ID screens give you plenty of background info.



See how the '93 season shaped up in both leagues.



This Trivia Game challenges your sports IQ.



SI Sports Almanac is very thorough. Here's where your curiosity can lead you...



Pow! Video shows you Joe Carter's memorable World Series homer.



SI's library of pics and articles is always open for business.



Individual players get their due with full stats.



Relive the Jays' quest for a second title via this thoughtful essay.



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5PGA1

Prehistoria

Windows/Mac \$69.95

Grolier Electronic Publishing Sherman Turnpike,
Danbury CT 06816 Phone: (203) 797-3530

Grolier's *Prehistoria* ought to be a terrific title, dealing as it does with the interesting subject of prehistoric life. But with multimedia, presentation is very nearly as important as content — and it's in presentation that *Prehistoria* falls short.

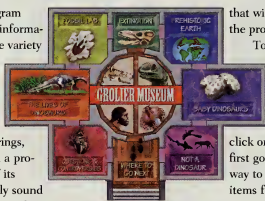


This is the kind of information you get on each animal, and it makes up the meat of the program.

The program does include information on a wide variety of prehistoric fauna, each of them represented with attractive artist's renderings, statistics, and a pronunciation of its name (the only sound in the program, other than that in the few vidclips).

There are also small text bits available for each animal — although something a bit more in-depth than the average few paragraphs would be nice.

You can access the information in a number of ways, though none is satisfactory. And none of them uses the kind of windowing and hypertexting you'd expect of a multimedia title; search for a creature, and you bring up its picture and info. Close



The Museum holds Prehistoria's multimedia bits — animated pieces and video clips of dubious worth.

that window, and you end the program!

To examine the next item on your list of search results, you have to go up to the menu bar, drag open the search list, and click on the next item. The first goes away, so there's no way to switch easily between items for comparison. And in text, even though different animal names are highlighted, you can't click on them to access information. The

presentation is simply primitive. It hampers real examination of the information included, and makes using the product too much of a chore.

— Matthew A. Firme



Journey to the Planets

Windows/Mac \$59.95

Multicom Publishing 1100 Olive Way, Suite 1250,
Seattle, WA 98101 Phone: (206) 622-5530

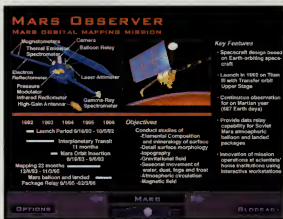
Space and consumer-software developers are becoming the accidental twins of the computer age. Perhaps the synergy comes from a common sense of pioneering. The cynical might attribute the proliferation of programs about space to the availability, at no cost, of a massive portfolio of photographs and films from NASA and its affiliates.

The latest entry into the crowded market is Multicom's *Journey to the Planets*. This handsome work presents highly technical information about the solar system, its exploration, planets and moons, and is accompanied by hundreds of photographs, video clips, diagrams, and animations. The look of the inter-

face is a standard of design elegance, manipulating text and illustration against a black background and bundling it all with an intuitive interface. It's best viewed in a darkened room.

Multicom converted topographical data collected by NASA spacecraft into computer-generated videos that offer a swift ride over the surface of each planet, and around various moons. Mountain ranges, volcanoes, and other surface changes fly into view as you sweep over the terrain.

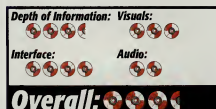
That said, I found myself wondering about the program's appeal. "Periods of rotation" and "inclinations of axis" are interesting concepts, which, though clearly explained, left me begging for more interactivity that would make better use of multimedia. The program has a static feel. It's a fine-looking point, click, and read system — yet it lacks hypertext, limiting the value of an elaborate glossary. Illustration quality is



Planets features a good point, click, and read system.

superb, and thumbnails expand to full screen without much loss of clarity. But this program is still too close to a book, without offering its comprehensiveness.

— Anne Gregor



The Anglo-Saxons

Windows

\$59.95

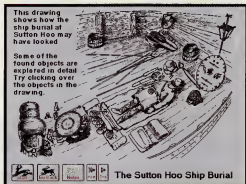
Cambridge Publishing 6269 Variel Ave., Suite B, Woodland Hills, CA 91367 Phone: (800) 992-8781

Between 400 and 600 A.D., people from Europe invaded and settled in England, mixing with the Celts and forming what is generally known as the Anglo-Saxon culture. The rich cultural legacy of the Anglo-Saxons includes *Beowulf*, King Arthur, a vibrant monastic society, artful goldwork, and, in due course, the British Empire and the colonizing of North America. RM Learning Resources and Cambridge Publishing, with the cooperation of the British Museum, has now produced *The Anglo-Saxons* a stunning multimedia reference work to this fascinating culture.

Based around a simple series of menus and icons, *The Anglo-Saxons*

offers a wealth of information on monastic life, book-making, writing, art, animal symbolism, archaeology, and history. And it visits various sites throughout England. Each subject opens a new series of options, providing an ever-more detailed view of the chosen subject, photos (many can be zoomed), music, and narration. You can answer a selection of Anglo-Saxon riddles, take a closer look at a golden clasp, or examine all the elements of a burial.

This is close to being an ideal multi-



Hot spots in this diagram of a ship burial allow you to explore it in more depth.

The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial



Various aspects of the archaeological dig at Sutton Hoo are examined in detail.

media reference product, and would have been closer yet if there had been some video or animation. There is so much to explore in *The Anglo-Saxons*, however, that this is but a minor quibble. It's simply a terrific, well-designed CD-ROM.

— T. Liam McDonald

Depth of Information: Visuals:



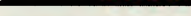
Interface:



Audio:



Overall:



Your Personal Trainer for the SAT

Windows

\$59.95

Davidson & Associates P.O. Box 2961, Torrance, CA 90509 Phone: (800) 556-6141

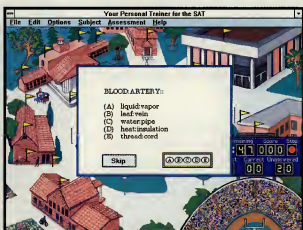
You can't fool us — you broke into a cold sweat at the mere sight of the letters SAT. Those three hours of hell are probably well in your past, but thousands of high schoolers put their lives on the line with the achievement-test-to-end-all-achievement-tests every fall and spring.

Your Personal Trainer for the SAT (now up to version 2.0) is an extremely practical program, easy to use, and helpful to anyone who scored less than 1600 on the PSAT. Its only drawback is that with only 750 questions, you end up repeating much too quickly, and only two full three-hour tests are included.

And although scoring is nearly instantaneous, you also can't access the reason your answers were wrong.

But *Trainer* has a lot of solid features, including an explanation of how the new Scholastic Aptitude Test (instituted in March 1994) differs from previous SATs. You also get a lot of helpful strategy ideas for each section of the test — from those nasty analogies to those frustrating theorems. You can choose to take the full test, or concentrate on the divisions with which you have the most trouble. And once you have a few scores in hand, you can see how you rack up against incoming students at more than 300 colleges and universities.

It's not going to help students get into Harvard or Berkeley, but it is going to give them some practical advice as

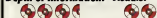


In the "game" section of *Trainer*, you answer a question for every flag on the campus screen, changing yellow flags to either green (correct) or red (incorrect).

well as a big boost in confidence.

— Leslie Mizell

Depth of Information: Visuals:



Interface:



Audio:



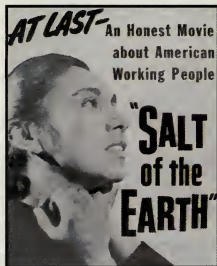
Overall:



Salt of the Earth

The Voyager Company One Bridge St., Irvington, NY 10533 Phone: (800) 446-2001 **Mac \$49.95**

One of the greatest things a CD-ROM can do is help us rediscover the past. Products like *Salt of the Earth* are doing us all a favor by retrieving lost fragments of our pop-culture heritage.



The film *Salt of the Earth* is an intriguing 1953 social drama (some have called it leftist propaganda) about a miners' strike in a small New Mexican town. Because the strike is long and the village poor, the miners and their families are forced to band together in solidarity. In the process, the women's roles are reexamined, changed, and enhanced.

Here's the real kicker: this film about social shutouts was produced by blacklisted Hollywood exiles and actual labor organizers (at least two of whom play themselves). Talk about art imitating life....

Voyager does a fine job of supporting the film, with an added mini-documentary about blacklisting and more background articles and photos than you could shake a stick at. I wish the movie looked a bit better in the larger of the two display formats, but, hey...that's Quicktime.

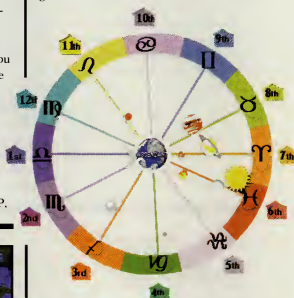
This film went undistributed and unseen for huge stretches of time. Thanks to Voyager, *Salt of the Earth* is now here to stay.

— P. P.

Astrology Source

Multicom Publishing 1100 Olive Way, Suite 1250, Seattle, WA 98101 Phone: (206) 622-5530 **Windows \$59.95**

If you're hooked on horoscopes — and you have a lot of space on your hard drive — Multicom's *Astrology Source* may be worth considering. You can generate dazzling natal and aspect charts and daily horoscopes, explore your compatibility with other people, and learn about astrology by combing the program's informational archives.



Astrological houses, planets, ascendant, sun, and moon signs are explained through narrated slide shows, and a database of 50 famous people illustrates how the program's creators believe astrological influences may have affected those individuals.

All of this comes at a price: a whopping 26 megabytes of hard-drive space for maximum installation, and 9 MB for a minimal install. While the former is supposed to increase performance significantly, we noticed very little difference when we tested both. Such demanding space requirements are especially puzzling considering that *Astrology Source* contains no full-motion video and little sound.

Recommended only for hard-core sign-watchers with spacious hard drives.

— K.Y.

Journey to the Source

Grid Media Ltd. 98 Vulcan House, 21-23 Leighton Rd., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong Phone: (011) 852 591 0730 **Windows/Mac \$59.95**

Explorer How Man Wong spent 18 months tracking the mighty Yangtze River from China's industrial coastal cities to the high Tibetan plateau, where he found a source of the river then known only to local nomads. *Journey to the Source* is an electronic travelogue of his photographs, with QuickTime movies and accompanying narrated text. Wong has a fine eye for detail — cultural, geographic, and economic.

You can join the river journey at four main entry points. Additional photos are compiled in a bonus picture album in another section. I missed Hypertext's ability to search for individual pages, and I felt somewhat confined, the opposite of what interactivity should be.

The creators describe their disc as



This recently won a 1994 New Media Invision Multimedia award for best interface design.

an "electronic coffee-table book" and that is perhaps its biggest problem. The program is at its best when the extensive text is hidden and instead heard as a voice-over behind a series of spectacular pictures that fill about one-third of the screen. You miss the movies this way (in any case, you have to supply the QuickTime software), but the slideshow approach has more impact.

— A. G.

VideoHound Multimedia

Windows

\$80

Visible Ink Software 835 Penobscot Bldg., Detroit, MI 488226 Phone: (800) 735-HOUND

Move over *Cinemania*, there's a new dog in town.

Of all the CD-ROM movie guides, *VideoHound Multimedia* is the best for finding useful info about movies. Based upon the massive *VideoHound's Golden Movie Retriever* (roughly the size of the Manhattan white pages), *VideoHound Multimedia* is the ultimate search engine for video junkies, with info on features, TV shows, children's videos, fitness, cartoons, and more.

The *VideoHound* search engine gives

you instant access to just about anything you might be looking for. There are listings by title, director, cast, or category, or by more specific search parameters, such as color or black-and-white, rating, or year. The "category" option comes with hundreds of different movie groupings, from romance and gangster to "Based on the Exploits of Ed Gein." Finding titles are a snap.

VideoHound rates each title on a scale of 4 bones to WOOF!, and the ratings are, in my opinion, nearly always right on target. Each title comes with three screens: one for general information (video formats, tint, length, year, ratings), one for credits, and one with a capsule review. You can generate complete videographies for cast members and directors, many of which come complete with photos and bios from Who's Who in Hollywood. These are some of the most useful

entries in any guides.

As a multimedia product, *VideoHound Multimedia* is pretty lean, com-



Entries are chock full of information, and include box art to help when shopping.

ing only with a smattering of sound effects and no video. But its strength lies in its content and super search engine, and this makes it a must-have for true video-hounds.

— T. Liam McDonald



VideoHound can generate videographies for almost any actor.



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Product Information Number 200

SimCity Enhanced CD-ROM

DOS No SRP

Interplay Productions 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 Phone: (714) 553-6678

The original *SimCity*, from Maxis, became one of the most popular and highly acclaimed floppy-disk entertainment titles in the history of computer gaming. Now, Interplay has delivered a



On the DISC!

Play an interactive demo from the new CD-ROM version of *SimCity*.

CD-ROM version, and it's certain to become one of the top multimedia titles of this era.

The premise is the same as in the earlier game: You're the city manager, and must juggle every aspect of the city's budget, its departments and services. And you must deal with the problems and disasters that seem to crop up constantly.

But Interplay has added the one key component that the floppy version couldn't have — real personality! Through the use of full-motion video and actors portraying city officials, news reporters, and ordinary sims (simulated people), *SimCity CD* picks up an offbeat sense of humor and a genuine human touch.

For example, instead of getting a written report saying that traffic prob-

lems are growing worse, you're now confronted by your Secretary of Transportation who makes sure you understand that he's not happy with the situation and with your handling of it.

When a nuclear meltdown hits a Boston power plant, the television anchorwoman starts to go through her own meltdown. When future-day Rio de Janeiro gets flooded, the reporter gets drenched. And when Godzilla invades Tokyo, the anchorwoman reports the news in true grade-B monster-movie Japanese accent.

You can also get gratuitous video peeks of your sims as they go about their daily routines — such as a guy taking a shower and... well, why tell all the ugly secrets.

In addition to the human perspective and a wacky sense of humor, *SimCity CD* features all of the fascinating game play of the original. The 256-

color artwork is not only attractive; it permits additional gradations of "tiling" to give more subtle information about

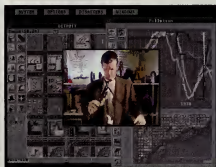


The new CD version gives you television news, like this first-hand report from a flooded Rio de Janeiro.

population densities and other city information. Details of the city itself are also much more visible. For example, build your city a football stadium, and then watch the traffic flow increase on game day, the stands fill up, and the game begin.

There is a wealth of other detail that helps make this a truly great game.

Sim-Peeping

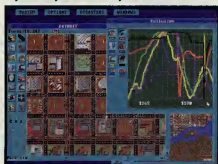


One of the new elements in the CD version of *SimCity* is the ability, from time to time, to peek in on your sims as they go about their day-to-day lives. Unfortunately, they seem to be a shallow bunch — but at least they pay their taxes.

Fun and Games in Ol' Detroit



If you really want to test your mettle, take the reins of fun-city Detroit back in 1972.



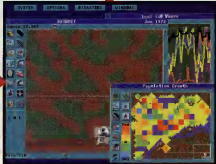
Looks like pollution and crime are your biggest challenges as the new Detroit City Manager.



The people are being taxed at a 7% rate now, and you're facing a negative cash flow.



Your popularity is at 73%, and that's good! So, how come 30,000 people vacated the city?



The blue areas show negative population growth (translation: places where people are leaving). Red areas show population growth.

It's compatible with all previously saved *SimCity* files, the music and sound effects are very well done, the online manual is readily available, there is selectable audio help, and you'll get audio warnings about problems before they become crises.

There are very few negatives about *SimCity CD*. The audio advice can get a bit annoying at times—but you can simply turn it off. There is a repetitiveness to the videos after a while, but even that's adjustable if it gets to be too much.

All in all, *SimCity CD* is the kind of enhanced upgrade to CD that shows just how much fun multimedia components can add to an already great idea. The Interplay approach adds a genuinely humorous element to an already excellent game. You can't go wrong with this title.

—Selby Bateman



Uh-oh. Our friendly Detroit news anchor seems to be getting some alarming news.



Seems that ol' Godzilla has surfaced and is headed toward the stadium. Maybe he can help you with some impromptu urban renewal!



The Horde

DOS \$59.95

Crystal Dynamics 2460 Embarcadero Way, Palo Alto, CA 94303 Phone: (415) 473-3400

The Horde was created by Paul Reiche III's development team Toys for Bob, and anyone familiar with Reiche's earlier games (*Star Control*, *Star Control II*, and *Archon Ultra*, to name a few) knows that no matter how deep one of his games is, it's been designed with one ultimate goal

cows, knights, and other items about the landscape. Each of these objects or actions costs money, which you earn through taxes from settlers and by chopping down trees (though in some parts of the game this clear-cutting policy costs you life-bar points).

You do this *Sim City*-style landscaping four times a year. After you've molded the landscape, you hear an eerie howl — and then comes the real fun. Using either a joystick, mouse, or keyboard (yeah, right!), you hoist your Grimthwacker and march out to defend your citizens from Hordelings. Slicing and dicing your way through these obnoxious beasts grows tougher as the seasons pass, but no one said being a landowner was easy.

Successfully protect your village, and more settlers move in, generating more tax revenue. You'll need that cash to buy advanced counter-Horde measures like teleportation crystals, bombs, knights, archers, and other devices to thwart the seemingly endless number of Hordelings bent on destroying your handiwork. But don't go on too much of a spending spree — just like your subjects cough up money to you, you've got to pay increasing amounts of taxes to Kronus Malor, the King's evil High Chancellor. Seems that Kronus is holding a grudge against you for robbing him of the throne by saving the King, and is constantly concocting schemes to make your life miserable.

Video clips — many containing information vital to your resource man-

agement and planning — are sprinkled throughout the game, and are of the same high quality as the intro. The performances by Kirk Cameron and Michael Gregory as Kronus deserve special mention, but the acting throughout is excellent. The soundtrack's one of the



Hordelings are fast, hordelings are mean — but the Grimthwacker is more than a match for this nasty red bunch of insatiable beasts.

best and most varied I've ever heard in a game — you'll find yourself tapping your foot as you work feverishly in preparation for the next invasion of critters.

The Horde looks and sounds great, and plays like a charm on a double-

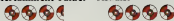


There's blood on the snow as you risk life and limb to protect the farmers who've chosen to live in Sir Chauncey's neck of the woods.

speed CD-ROM. Most of all, it's a lot of fun — something that many developers lose sight of in their rush to cash in on the multimedia craze.

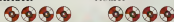
— Stephen Poole

Entertainment Value: Visuals:



Interface:

Audio:



Overall:



The backstabbing Kronus Malor puts on a good show, but there's no hiding his contempt for the serving-boy-turned-knight.

— fun. And that's exactly what *The Horde* delivers from the get-go.

Things start off with a real multimedia bang, as full-motion video — very good full-motion video, too — is used to relate the story of Chauncey (that's you), played by Kirk "Growing Pains" Cameron. Chauncey's an orphan who wound up as serving boy at King Winthrop's court. After saving the king's life with an early version of the Heimlich maneuver, you're knighted, granted some land, and handed the "Grimthwacker" — a sword Winthrop used to protect his subjects from the Horde, assorted red critters who'll smash anything they can't eat (which is nearly everything).

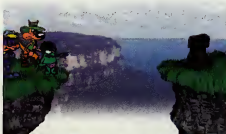
Pointing and clicking from an oblique overhead perspective, you build walls, dig pits full of spikes, extend rivers and lakes, plant saplings (which you can later cut down and sell), and place a few

Wallobee Jack: The Bingi Burra Stone and The Thai Sun Adventure

Mac/Windows \$29 each

WordPerfect 1555 N. Technology Way Orem, UT 84057 Phone: (801) 228-9939

Wallobee Jack is a kangaroo from down under whose idea of excitement is to outsmart Dagon the bad crocodile and retrieve missing artifacts and valuables. He sports a cocky wide-brimmed hat to match his thumbs-up



The Wallobee titles look good, combining animation, digitized photography, and 3-D renderings.

attitude to life, and acquires a French feline companion, Francesca Felini, in the first episode, *The Bingi Burra Stone*.

The anthropomorphic pair are meant to travel worldwide in their search for adventure in exotic places, and you can travel with them, using English or French dialog. These first two titles in the Wallobee Jack series, however, yield less excitement than the locales warrant. A combination of technical awkwardness and sparse interactivity detract from the enjoyment of playing.

Central to both titles is a Quiclick Interaction System, which governs the action and tests the reflexes of young and old alike. The animated scenes roll along on the screen, and then, suddenly, the mouse arrow metamor-

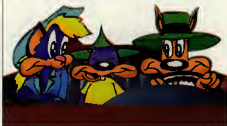
phoses into a magnifying glass. Players must hunt for a hot spot and click before an unseen clock stops ticking. Captain Hook never felt such pressure, particularly when the speed button is set at the difficult level. Quiclick is a good idea which needs further development.

Failure to find the hot spot can mean disaster. Your balloon flight to Bangkok comes to an abrupt end on a mountaintop, for example. In some cases a choice of hot spots leads to wrong decisions. Your car falls off a cliff. Sea creatures interrupt your travel plans. Those amuse. Others become downright annoying. In *The Thai Sun Adventure*, if Dagon is the first through the final maze and into the hidden chamber which hides the golden elephant, you find yourself jousting with the crocodile in an effort to click on the word QUIT. It's funny once or twice. After that, reach for the escape button, which is a better solution than the one I indulged in — shouting at the screen.

In *Bingi Burra*, a Dagon victory means being kicked out of the program altogether. The second title, *Thai Sun*, is a little more forgiving. You go back to the Shortcuts screen and start the section again. Unfortunately, I began to feel as if I were in a bad rehearsal. The dialog, actions, and scenery rarely change, no matter how many times I had to repeat the scene.

These titles look good. The developers have combined animation, digitized photography, and 3-D renderings into

attractive sequences. When Francesca arrives in Australia, she flies through a digitized background of the Sydney skyline. In *Thai Sun*, the city of Bangkok stretches out before the intrepid explor-



Francesca & Jack get some help from a friendly native in *The Thai Sun Adventure*.

ers as they arrive from the countryside.

The characters look and move better than many cartoon types on television, thanks to thousands of hand-drawn frames. Pre-schoolers will feel comfortable. They only need to recognize a few map names.

WordPerfect has long-term plans for its Wallobee Jack series. A third title, due out in September, will contain more variety and offer more randomness. Screens will have multiple hot spots, and there will be additional problems to solve at different degrees of difficulty. I'd wait.

— Anne Gregor

Francesca Felini



Entertainment Value: Visuals:



Interface:



Audio:



Overall: 

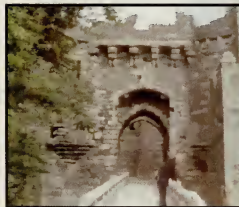
Castles II: Siege & Conquest Multimedia

DOS *no* SRP

Interplay Productions 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 Phone: (714) 553-6678

In medieval society, castles provided not only protection from enemies, but also a focal point of culture and society. *Castles II: Siege & Conquest Multimedia*, from Interplay, is a strategy game that captures the nature of this society, where alliances were made and broken, the pope was supreme holy ruler, borders were constantly shifting, and a few

growing realm. Each task comes with a certain number of points which you can



Castles II Multimedia includes more than 30 minutes of clear, full-screen documentary video from the BBC.



Designs for castles such as Beaumaris can be used in your game.

affords protection, but also makes your people happier. There's enough of a strategy element to keep *Castles II* challenging and interesting, but it's not too difficult for those new to strategy games. Plus, there's an element of palace intrigue, as you make the various decisions facing a medieval lord.

Castles II Multimedia enhances the original *Castles II* by adding a substantial amount of documentary video from the BBC. Video is played full-screen and is simply some of the clearest video I've ever seen on a computer screen. This video provides not only an excellent introduction to the history of castles and the times in which they were built, but also supplements an extensive online castle reference.

Featuring almost a dozen of the most prominent castles throughout the world, this reference includes photos, video, narration,

design specs, and weighs the benefits and drawbacks of each. You can drop to this reference from within the castle-building section of the game, choose a historical castle, and order it built. More than that, game play is liberally sprinkled with footage from *Alexander Nevsky* and *The Private Life of Henry VIII* at critical points in the action. A nicely enhanced medieval soundtrack and effective voice acting round out the package, making it a truly exceptional multimedia game.

Interplay could have spiffed up the game graphics just a bit more, but on the whole this is a great port to CD-ROM, and one of the few which owners of the original should also pick up.

— T. Liam McDonald

Entertainment Value:  **Visuals:** 
Interface:  **Audio:** 
Overall: 

The Manhole: CD-ROM Masterpiece Edition

Mac \$49.95

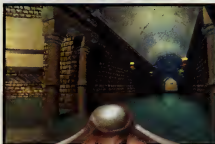
Cyan P.O. Box 28096, Spokane, WA 99228 Phone: (509) 468-0807

Take a generous helping of Lewis Carroll, add a sprinkling of Chris Van Allsburg and a dash of Dr. Seuss, and you've got *The Manhole*.

It was probably inevitable after the recent success of *Myst* that Cyan (*Myst*'s developers) would dust off this six-year-old game. But Cyan has done a lot more than just transfer the program to CD — *The Manhole* is now a glorious visual experience. It's not a game in the traditional sense. Instead, the action begins



Hitch a ride with Rejan Elephant...



...and his gondola takes you through the canals under the tower...



...until you finally arrive at the chess world where Molly Rhinoceros lives.



*Be sure to watch a little TV while visiting Mr. Rabbit — there's a documentary on the making of *Myst* on the air.*

when a beanstalk mysteriously grows from a manhole. You can climb up or down the vine to an interconnected fantasy world.

Since there's no plot or single storyline, you explore this magical place at your own speed, zipping around to meet all the characters, or leisurely seeing all the sights and exploring the nooks and crannies of the houses where walruses, rabbits, and dragons dwell. If you poked around the original PC or Mac version of *The Manhole*, you won't find much of the action changed (except the flamingo on top of the rook tower has oddly been changed to a rhinoceros... who still enjoys standing on one leg). But the graphics are so incredible that everything seems new.

While you're gasping at the intricacies of a teacup, however, don't overlook the game's terrific sound. A radio in Mr. Dragon's lair allows you to select from a

bunch of different tunes, and each other area has its own theme as well. The character's voices are largely well chosen, too.

The Manhole is a huge game, so you probably won't be able to install it without cleaning tons off your hard drive. But it plays pretty peppy right off the disc, with access times a lot shorter than many games.

It won't take you or your child long to explore all the wonders of *The Manhole*, but you'll

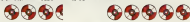


*Mr. Dragon is the coolest inhabitant of *The Manhole*, despite his tendency to burn food.*

come back to it in the same way that you return again and again to a favorite storybook. It truly is entertainment for all ages — everyone will enjoy the new things lurking behind every door, inside every drawer, or down every drop-off.

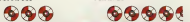
— Leslie Mizell

Entertainment Value: Visuals:

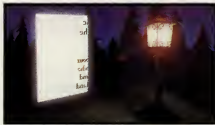


Interface:

Audio:



Overall:



Stepping through The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe is a delightful surprise.

MegaRace

DOS \$69.95

Software Toolsworks 60 Leveroni Ct., Novato, CA 94949 Phone: (415) 883-3000

Even if you don't enjoy arcade games, you owe it to yourself and your CD-ROM drive to give *MegaRace* a try. It's nearly as much fun to watch as it is to play, so as long as you know *someone* who likes drivin' and shootin', you can appreciate the bang-up job French development team Cryo has done with this product.

MegaRace is presented in the guise of a game show of the same name on the

and skip straight to the car-selection screen. And Lance's presence yields a secret treat: If you hit the Pause/Break key and then any alpha-numeric key, you can basically transform Lance Boyle into a poor-man's Max Headroom.

The Five Circuits of MegaRace



Factoryland



Fractal Space



NewSan



Maeva



Terminal City

Virtual World Broadcast television. Virtual contestants are allowed to choose a heavily armed and armored car, then sent to a track in one of a variety of virtual cities, where they take on that town's resident "speed gang." There are no prizes for second place: You either outrun or outgun all the other racers, or your 15 minutes of fame come to an end.

Hosting the mayhem is Lance Boyle, who looks like Don Knotts and sounds like Dick Vitale. Personally, I get a kick out of his cornball jokes and manic delivery, but if he starts to grate on your nerves you can always hit the ESC key

There are five different circuits in all, with two or three tracks for each—the graphics for all of them are incredible. NewSan is a virtual rendition of San Francisco, complete with the Golden Gate Bridge and gut-wrenching hills; Maeva is an underwater city inspired by the legend of Atlantis; Factoryland's tracks are surrounded by all sorts of industrial machinery; Terminal City sports an outer-space track, orbited by jagged asteroids; and Fractal Space is best described as Escher-meets-Owlsley.

With circuits like these, it goes without saying that players looking for realism in *MegaRace* will be disappointed. *Indycar 2025* this ain't, and destruction rather than finesse is the name of the game here. None of the cars handles very well, but once you get the hang of it you'll be able to grab power-ups — and dodge obstacles — without too much trouble.

In a "real" racing sim, you often see several cars at any given time; in *MegaRace* you never see more than two. You start at the back with a car immediately in front of you, but you've got to nearly lap that car — or blast it to smithereens — before the next one appears.

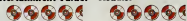
The reason races are handled this way seems obvious: Cryo didn't want to worry about handling the movement of more than two objects on the track at any given time. And that's understandable, considering all the objects that are moving around outside the walled tracks: schools of fish dart by in Maeva, asteroids rotate as they drift alongside a track in Fractal Space, and radar dishes

rotate in Factoryland. You really do have to see it to believe it.

I've yet to see a CD-ROM game this graphically stunning with such smooth animation — and tons of it, too. Bottom line: *MegaRace* puts the pedal to the metal to move to the front of arcade-action games on CD-ROM.

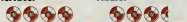
— Stephen Poole

Entertainment Value: Visuals:



Interface:

Audio:



Overall: 10 out of 10 stars

Millennium Auction

Windows \$69.95

Eidolon 5716 Moshulu Ave., Riverdale, NY 10471 Phone: (718) 884-7095

No one's ever published an art-auction simulation before, and in truth I was a little wary when I first loaded up *Millennium Auction*: Aside from high-quality scans of classic artwork, what could this sort of game have to offer CD-ROM users looking for a challenging and rewarding experience?

But I was in for a big surprise. I



In the Gallery, you'll meet your fellow bidders and gather valuable information.

don't know about art, but I know what I like — and I really like *Millennium Auction*. Yes, the graphics are stunning, the animations fluid and eye-catching, and the music rich and lavish. But there's a lot of game play here, too, especially if you compete with one or more human opponents — and, believe it or not, it's even educational.



Meet Archer Stevenson, the classiest — and snappiest — auctioneer in the 21st century.

The game takes place in the early 21st century. Up to four people can compete, each playing as one of eight wildly different characters who have only

two things in common — very hefty bank accounts and an appreciation for all types of art and collectibles, from a Van Gogh self-portrait or a snapshot of J. Edgar “Mary” Hoover dressed in a ball gown. Detailed dossiers are available for each character, cementing the illusion that these are real people — very important, since one of these guys is supposed to be you.

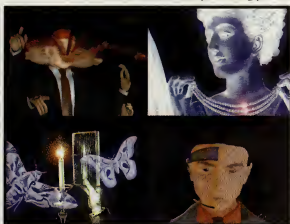
The rendered characters are some of the most striking you'll see in a computer game. They aren't photorealistic — they look more like mannequins than real people. But they are distinctive, and their movement is so smooth that you willingly yield yourself to the illusion that they are indeed flesh and blood.

After registering for the auction, you move to the gallery and meet your fellow bidders. Here you can eavesdrop on conversations, and the info you pick up lends depth to the characters. You can also pick up news of trends in the art world and elsewhere that could affect the value of the pieces up for sale that day. The coolest part of eavesdropping, however, is in the surreal presentation: As the characters talk you see symbolic images pop up onscreen, and the characters begin to warp, bend, inflate, twist, and more.

Newspaper, radio, and TV reports have news that will affect your bidding, too, but you must take it all with a grain of salt. If a tsunami is headed toward Easter Island, for example, the Easter Island sculpted head that's up for sale that day will drastically increase in price after the wave hits — but if the wave peters out,

that item isn't so special anymore.

Play is pretty straightforward once the auction starts: Based on the info you've picked up, you bid on objects you think will increase in value. The descriptions accompanying the historic items are well-written, actually teaching you a



Eavesdrop on a conversation, and you're treated to a truly surreal animated sequence.

thing or two about art and art history. And the digitized photos of historic and fictional objects are sharp and vivid — they look absolutely splendid.

The player with the highest portfolio



The quality of the scanned artwork is phenomenally good.

lio value after all items have been bought and sold wins — but while it's exciting to come out on top at the end of the bidding, there are no real losers in *Millennium Auction*.

— Stephen Poole

Entertainment Value: Visuals:  Audio: 

Interface:  **Audio:** 

Overall: 

Virtual Tarot

Mac/Windows \$69.95

Virtual Media Works P.O. Box 70030, Sunnyvale, CA 94086 Phone: (408) 739-0301

Throughout the ages, as humans stumbled blindly through the unknown, many turned to mysticism,



Virtual Tarot allows you to ask a specific question before each reading.

hoping to find some cosmic key that would reveal to them the meaning of life. Some have believed, and still do, that our spiritual patterns and tendencies can be seen and interpreted in a

deck of cards. Now, thanks to CD technology and Virtual Media Works, the ancient art of cartomancy is making it's way to your computer. Using spectacular graphics and animation combined with CD quality voice and music synthesis, Virtual Tarot presents fortunetelling in a whole new light.

After picking a significator card (the card that will affect all of the readings you do in a given session), the program is ready to begin. Virtual Tarot offers readings of all sorts, some oriented towards finance, love, and health, while others acting as daily advisors. The controls are easy to use, and help options are available from almost any screen. You can also learn a great deal about the cards, their history, and their readings. All of this is accompanied by delicate new-age music and slick graphic backgrounds that mirror the sort of reading you're currently working on.

Virtual Tarot is probably not going to appeal to those looking for a quick-fix fortuneteller. The program takes its subject material very seriously, and seeks to

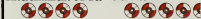


By clicking on any of the cards in a reading, you can hear a replay of that card's significance. You also can view an interpretation of the reading as a whole.

use the cards as a method of guidance more than a form of augury. But if you're interested in the cards, and you're looking for a well-designed way to bring the Tarot to your computer, this is a title that's definitely worth your consideration.

— Karie Ward

Entertainment Value: Visuals:



Interface:

Audio:



Overall: 5 out of 5 stars

Microcosm

DOS \$79

Psygnosis Ltd., 675 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139 Phone: (617) 497-7794

When you first load this game, you might be impressed with the full-motion video of the opening sequence. But that's probably about all that's impressive about *Microcosm*; even the plot that sets the stage for this shooter is uninspired.

It's 2051, and on the planet of



The graphics during action scenes are colorful, but distinguishing the good things from the bad is a dicey affair.

Bodor in the Bator system, mega-corporation Axiom has injected the president of rival company Cybertech with micro-submersible probes. In an unabashed nod to the 1966 sci-fi film *Fantastic Voyage*, you're shrunk and placed in a miniaturized assault craft, then injected into the Prez with the goal of blasting



Microcosm boasts some smooth video, but its impact is dampened by mediocre acting.

the alien vessels and saving the Big Guy's life. After watching the extended intro detailing all this, I'm left with one question: Is this how you assassinate someone in the 21st century?

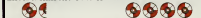
But that's a minor complaint compared to the real problem with *Microcosm*: It's not a very good shooter.

Your craft steers itself, so all you're left to do is move a cross hair around the screen, shooting whatever looks like it doesn't belong inside a body. The manual doesn't have diagrams of the enemies, so initially you might have trouble distinguishing what you should be aiming for. Once you've puzzled that out, however, you should have little trouble — the enemies always appear at the same place and time, so success is more a question of remembering their pattern of attack than anything else.

There's no denying that *Microcosm* is graphically striking in certain spots, but there's just not enough to do here, even for a shooter. If you're looking for arcade action on CD-ROM, check out the excellent *MegaRace*.

— Stephen Poole

Entertainment Value: Visuals:



Interface:

Audio:



Overall: 3 out of 5 stars

Sam & Max Hit the Road



On the **DISC!**
Meet Sam and Max yourself in an
interactive demo.

DOS

\$69.95

LucasArts P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael CA 94912
Phone: (415) 721-3300

You've got a big, fuzzy, fedora-wearing dog in a rumpled suit. A hyperactive, sometimes sadistic naked bunny. There's a missing, once-frozen bigfoot. And connecting it all is some of the most genuinely funny writing and dialogue in the history of PC gaming.

It's called *Sam & Max Hit the Road*, and it's one of the best games this year.

Sam & Max springs from the mind of Steve Purcell, and originated as a short-lived series of underground comics. Purcell ended up working for LucasArts,

and persuaded the company to let him bring Sam and Max — self-proclaimed “freelance police” — to the PC.

It's pretty tough to describe just how good, how professional and entertaining, *Sam & Max* really is. From the opening cartoon to the game's closing credits, the characters and plot simply shine. The story, in which the freelance police investigate the disappearance of Bruno the Frozenest Bigfoot, is a never-



Sam and Max (sans pants), Freelance Police

ending series of plot twists and comedy. The graphics are first-rate, and match both the comic-book original and the feel of the game perfectly. The voice acting is just as good, bringing the bizarre world of *Sam and Max* to life.



What game would be complete without the World's Largest Ball of Twine?

I've been playing PC games for many years, and I enjoyed *Sam & Max Hit the Road* more than any other graphic adventure I've ever played. You want a criticism? OK, the interface takes a bit of getting used to. But if you have the slightest interest in gaming, buy this game!

— Matthew A. Firme

Entertainment Value: Visuals:



Interface:



Audio:



Overall: 10 discs



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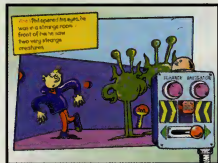
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Zargon Zoo

Plum Productions Bartley House, Main Rd., East Boldre, Hants, UK SO42 7WT Phone: 011 44 590 612443
Windows/Mac \$59

A lad named Phil Naylor is bored with his sleepy little Northern England town. He wishes life was exciting, but it usually isn't. Then a spacecraft appears,



whisking Phil away to the Planet Zargon, where he's put on display for curious aliens. He escapes, is recaptured, and then released when his captors realize his yearning to return home.

That's the plot of *Zargon Zoo*, but I'm still trying to uncover the meaning. Is it that we should be content with our circumstances? Or that we should be more respectful of other peoples and cultures? Or that it's cool to be zapped into outer space?

A couple of other questions: Why isn't there any documentation to explain the Game section?; and why do they call it the Game section when there are no quizzes, puzzles, or challenging activities, just different ways of reaccessing the 32 story panels?

Questions aside, here's what's right with *Zargon Zoo*. The cartoony illustration style will probably delight youngsters, as will the English accents American kids often like to hear. There are also plenty of on-screen items that trigger cute animations. An added plus — kids can print the story out as a makeshift coloring book.

Still, I wonder what kids will take away from *Zargon Zoo*. It seems curiously devoid of any theme at all. The boy in the story returns home unchanged, and so will kids who boot up *Zargon Zoo*.

— P.P.

Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space

Interplay Productions 17922 Fifth Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 Phone: (714) 553-6678 **DOS no SRP**

In Buzz Aldrin's *Race into Space*, you take command of the U.S. or Soviet space program from its infancy through (with luck and good planning) a successful manned lunar landing and return to Earth. The primary objective, just as in the real Soviet-U.S. space race of the '60s, is to beat the other guy to the moon.

This is largely a game of resource management that rewards the careful planner, from budget strategies and

careful investment in materials and training to astronaut morale and mission risk assessment. The detail is thorough and realistic — a result of careful design thanks to the involvement of Buzz himself.

The CD-ROM version, with its stirring soundtrack and excellent footage of various launches, adds sufficient bells and whistles to make things interesting. However, *Race into Space* is definitely a methodical strategy game, and the going can be somewhat static for those craving lively interaction.

Anyone with even a passing interest in the space race will find this a welcome addition to their CD-ROM library.

— S.B.

Shadowcaster

Origin Systems P.O. Box 161750, Austin TX 78716
 Phone: (512) 335-5200 **DOS \$59.95**

Combining the best high-speed arcade action with a fantastic plot line and puzzles, *Shadowcaster* is guaranteed to boggle the mind. It employs fantastic graphics, sound, and storytelling to completely immerse you in a virtual world both dark and wonderous.

Shadowcaster is a standard first-person maze game that uses the familiar Wolfenstein 3-D engine. As Kirt, the last of a race of shapeshifters, you must fight your way through level after level filled with bizarre creatures straight out of a

to help you through often treacherous corridors. Every monster, structure, and object has been detailed in the high-quality graphics and special effects that you've come to expect from Origin's designers.



As the mighty Moarin, you have the natural defense that four arms and claws can offer.

For those already familiar with the title on floppy, you'll find that the CD-ROM is well worth another look. All graphics and sound effects have been improved, and digitized speech has also been added. Perhaps the best upgrade of all is the addition of two new levels that weren't included in the original disk versions.

If you're a fan of action/adventure, you must have this game. The fast-paced play and brilliant visuals will keep your face glued to the monitor for hours at a time. If you're more interested in puzzle or strategy titles, this may be the one to pull you to the other side. Either way, *Shadowcaster* is sure to be an excellent addition to any gamer's library.

— T.C.W.



New plot screens have been added to the CD version, making the storyline a little smoother.

fairly tale gone wrong. To protect yourself, you use your shapeshifting heritage to transform into any of six different beasts, each of which has unique skills

Great Naval Battles Vol. II: Guadalcanal 1942-1943

SSI 675 Almaron Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086
Phone: (408) 737-6800 **DOS \$50**

The naval battles that racked the waters surrounding the South Pacific



Using a map display, multiple ships are controlled from the flag bridge in *Great Naval Battles II*.

Solomon Islands were some of the most fierce of World War II, and almost every form of naval warfare and ship came into play. Carriers, destroyers, cruisers, and battleships all slugged it out in a series of confrontations both day and night. In bringing these battles into its *Great Naval Battles* series, SSI has created one of the best World War II naval warfare games going.

The *Great Naval Battles* engine has been substantially overhauled for *Great Naval Battles II*, and now operates in beautiful SVGA graphics, with a much easier interface, better sound, and a more intuitive overall design. Using a series of maps and stations (gunnery, air ops, torpedoes, navigation) you command a task force, or the individual ships in that force, through a wide and varied series of battles, or a unified campaign game.

Great Naval Battles II is a terrific installment in a maturing series, and is well worth a look by WWII buffs, or for those who want to learn a little more about some of the most important sea battles in history.

— T.L.M.

The Ultimate Trivia CD

Microforum 1 Woodborough Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6M 5A1 Phone: (800) 465-2323
Windows \$49.95

Trivia buffs will get a kick out of *The Ultimate Trivia CD*, which resembles Jeopardy or Trivial Pursuit. Players answer questions from ten categories, ranging from Hollywood Mania and Famous Quotes to Sound Effects and Exotic Animals. For questions in the Relationships category players may want to consult a pop psychology text first. Here's an example: "What is a common myth in relationships that causes prob-

lems between men and women?"

Even though the disc claims to be multimedia, there is little use of video or animation. Players may get bored or even frustrated, especially since the correct answer isn't given after a wrong response. And why does the sports category cover only baseball and basketball?

But the disc has some spunk. Nifty sound effects and voice-overs accompany many of the 500 questions, and incorrect answers elicit sassy responses like booing or Star Trek-type phaser blasts. Likewise, evaluations at the conclusion of a game are witty. Anyone who enjoys trivia games should check out *The Ultimate Trivia CD*.

— L.H.

Companions of Xanth

Legend Entertainment Company P.O. Box 10810,
14200 Park Meadow Dr., Chantilly, VA 22021
Phone: (703) 222-8500 **DOS \$59.95**

Piers Anthony's world of magic talents and heroic quests has finally made its way to CD-ROM. In Legend's *Companions of Xanth*, you take on the

adventures, in order to win the game, you must grab items you find along the way and use them to overcome the many obstacles in your path. During your travels, you'll have to resist the temptations of a sultry demoness, escape a steam-breathing dragon, and find your way into a powerful magician's castle. The entire game is filled with attractive imagery, detailing the strange plants and animals

that fill the land of Xanth.

The main difference between the floppy and disc versions of *Xanth* is the addition of voice acting. The actors' voices match the characters well, adding a dose of realism to the play experience.

Overall, *Xanth* is a great graphic adventure, with good solid



This strange fellow will keep you busy for hours while you gather ingredients for his magic potion.

role of a skeptical young man who's been thrown into a battle between two good-like demons.

Very similar in design to Legend's other graphic adventures, *Xanth* uses a simple interface to guide you through your bizarre journey. Like most graphic

visuals, terrific sound, and a storyline that any fantasy fan will love. The only problem is that owners of the original floppy version may find that the CD doesn't offer enough in the way of new features to make it worth the purchase.

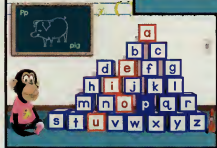
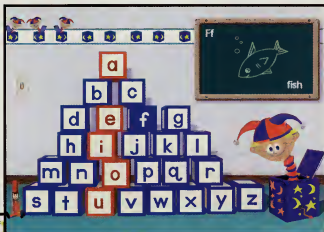
— T.W.

Dream Team Series

Windows/Mac \$49.95 each

Bright Star Technology 40 Lake Bellevue, Suite 350, Bellevue, WA 98005 Phone: (206) 451-3697

Just a few years back, educational software was a fairly static, unexciting category. Not any more. After studying the success of the computer-game and video-game market, educational publishers responded with more appealing titles, blending attractive graphics, sound, and



Bananas and Jack (top right) are friendly guides throughout Alphabet Blocks.

animation with elements of game play. By wrapping learning goals in a layer of game themes, the "edutainment" category was born, and computer educational titles have not been the same since. The result: better quality software that children actually want to play.

The Dream Team lineup, from Bright Star Technology (a subsidiary of Sierra), is such an example. These titles span a variety of learning themes and cover several different age groups. It's nice to report that each Dream Team title is consistently good in all areas important to the success of an educational software package. Each offers a logical design and interface nearly any child can navigate (a must for any educational title), and features crisp, colorful graphics, nice animation, and lively

sound. All of the titles feature cute, animated hosts that talk kids through the programs, offering help, instruction, and encouragement. The manuals for each package include notes to parents for customizing the program as well as suggested complementary activities. Most significantly, each Dream Team title has sufficient depth and challenge to keep children engaged and progressing from



one skill level to the next. Here's a brief look at each title.

In *Alphabet Blocks*, children start in a play room, in which they can explore objects or listen to any number of songs. Designed for ages 3-6,

Alphabet Blocks is hosted by Bananas and Jack. From the play room, you can select one of three skill levels and any of four classrooms that teach matching letters, identifying letters by name or by sound, or identifying words by sound.

A number of features can be modified. For example, letter styles can be changed to cursive, upper- or lowercase, and from any point in the program, you can quickly jump to another skill level in a matter of mouse clicks.

Early Math, also for ages 3-6, is hosted by a lively alien named Loid. Starting in Loid's house, children move to one of four rooms, each with a unique activity. Areas of concentration are counting (with sheep), shape recognition, place value (1s, 10s, and 100s), and simple math operations (addition and subtraction). Exit Loid's house to hop in a convertible and drive across a bridge, where shapes must be moved, rotated, and combined with other shapes in order to fill a large gap in the road (in advanced levels, children must deal with assorted, fairly complex polygons).

Another bridge offers practice in analytical *Early Math* ranges widely in kinds of activities and in skill levels.



cal skills in which numbers, letters, and shapes must be placed in the correct sequence or pattern. There's an abundance of activity in this program.

Beginning Reading follows *Alphabet Blocks* as a logical next-step



The comprehensive Beginning Reading covers a great deal of ground, making it useful to kids for a long period of time.

for starting readers. It uses the same structure and interface as *Alphabet Blocks*, the same hosts — Bananas and Jack — and the same style play rooms. Targeted to ages 4-7, *Beginning Reading* uses basic phonics as building blocks for learning to put letters together to make words. It starts with two-letter consonant and vowel sounds, moves to rhyming words, progresses to building simple words from word parts, and then teaches sight reading. Because of the careful progression of activities, this title does not offer multiple skill levels, although a particularly nice feature is an



extra activity found in the Storybook Room. Here a book is presented and Jack reads it aloud. He then reads it again, omitting words that the child must identify and

place in the sentence.

Kids Typing is a clever typing tutor for ages 7-10 hosted by Spooky the

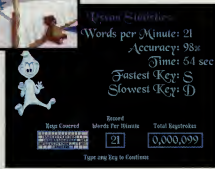


Ghost. It's hard to imagine any youngster not improving typing skills with the tailored feedback offered throughout this program. Lessons include an onscreen keyboard with keys that change color as they're typed.

The program environment is a house in which the child visits different rooms and can gain a humorous reward by typing accurately and quickly. A thoughtful, effective program — especially because of the tailored, personal approach — *Kids Typing* is highly recommended.

The final two Bright Star titles focus on spelling: *Basic Spelling Tricks* (ages 7-10) and *Advanced Spelling Tricks* (ages 9-12). These are similar in approach and structure. Both are hosted by Yobi (a cross between Yoda and Mr. Magoo) and incorporate an arcade-style adventure theme. Kids must solve logic problems by traversing landscapes in search of letters that comprise a spelling word. In *Basic Tricks*, the theme is Africa, where a flood threatens the countryside. Kids must make a long trek (saved games are imperative, of course)

Detailed reports are offered in Kid's Typing, and incentives for speed and accuracy are offered at all levels.



group, kids grew weary after working through most of a sequence only to mistake a jump and start the scene over. In some cases, it was a 20-30 minute investment — and they really did know how to spell the word anyway. These titles are recommended only for those with good hand-eye skills.

Advanced Tricks is mechanically the same, although it employs an Arctic theme.

While these spelling titles are modeled after real computer games (and they're lots of fun), they're also the most



Basic Spelling Tricks and Advanced Spelling Tricks are the most game-like titles in the Dream Team series, but kids need solid arcade-style skills to succeed.

frustrating. In my test group, kids grew weary after working through most of a sequence only to mistake a jump and start the scene over. In some cases, it was a 20-30 minute investment — and they really did know how to spell the word anyway. These titles are recommended only for those with good hand-eye skills.

Here's how we break down our overall ratings for each title. The full ratings box at the end of this review reflects our opinion of the Dream Team lineup.

Alphabet Blocks ★★★★★

Early Math ★★★★★

Beginning Reading ★★★★★

Kid's Typing ★★★★★

Basic Spelling Tricks ★★★★★

Advanced Spelling Tricks ★★★★★

Note that the Dream Team series will be marketed under the Sierra label this fall.

— Lance Elko



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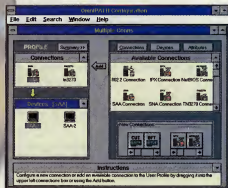
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Bug Adventure

Windows/DOS \$79.95

Knowledge Adventure 4502 Dyer St., La Crescenta, CA 91214 Phone: (800) 542-4240

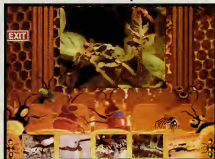
If you squirm at the sight of creepy crawlies, *Bug Adventure* will not put your mind at rest. However, your children won't hesitate to call up the many pictures of hairy-legged spiders, flies, and beetles included on the disc.

Bug Adventure leads youngsters, via



Bug Adventure's infested with fun matching games like this one.

the raucous tones of "Flight of the Bumblebee," into a flower-strewn field that serves as the desktop. From this



The next show is only a mouse click away in the Honeycomb Theater.


tranquil setting, various insects chaperone them into the Bug Basement, the Honeycomb theater, several guessing games, a bug storybook, and the standard Knowledge Adventure reference section.

But beware: the peaceful look of the field belies the nasty bug activities taking place below. In Honeycomb Theater, ants shred leaves from trees, a frog stalks and swallows an unsuspecting cricket, and a spider gobbles a fish. In Bug

Basement, a butterfly poses for closer scrutiny under 3-D glasses, and an ant shows off its many parts. Hop into the reference section to learn more about bees, ants, butterflies, flies, beetles, and spiders. My one quibble is with the quality of the graphics, which sometimes lack sharpness.

Knowledge Adventure products are usually packed with information, and *Bug Adventure* is no exception. All reference text has a narration option, giving preschoolers access to more of the material. Built-in links allow you to follow subject threads over many screens. *Bug Adventure* knows just how to play to the ghoulish interests of children ages 3-8. And when they're tired, they can just click the fly-swatter to get rid of what's bugging them.

— Anne Gregor

Learning Value:	Visuals:
     	   
Interface:	Audio:
     	   
Overall:     	

Fatty Bear's Birthday Surprise

DOS/Mac \$49.95

Humongous Entertainment 13110 NE 177th Place, #180, Woodinville, WA 98072 Phone: (206) 485-1212

A disk-based children's hit in 1993, *Fatty Bear* is an imaginative exploring game for ages 3-7, and now it's on CD-ROM. The purpose of the game is to help Fatty Bear, a magically animated stuffed animal belonging to a little girl named Kayla, make and decorate a birthday cake for her. The child must guide Fatty Bear throughout the house and into the garage and yard to find items needed for her surprise (there is a total of 30 locations). Quite often, a problem involves several steps, which translates to exercises in deduction and

logic. While the premise of the game sounds simple, there are plenty of subplots and diversions. For younger children, this means hours of play.

Sporting large, stylized, and colorful graphics, outstanding character voices, and a charming soundtrack, *Fatty Bear* is guaranteed to capture — and hold — the attention of

youngsters. It's so well designed and nicely paced that it keeps kids wanting to stay with it, and to return and explore even after they've completed their quest.

The game also comes bundled with a 48-page educational activity book, crayons, pencil, and a few other goodies.

There's no advantage offered by the CD-ROM over the disk-based version (other than saving hard-drive storage space) — both disk and disc versions are



Fatty Bear has a charming personality that young kids respond to quickly.

identical. While we don't look kindly at "shovelware," *Fatty Bear's Birthday Surprise* has so much charm that we're looking the other way.

— Lance Elko

Learning Value:	Visuals:
   	   
Interface:	Audio:
     	   
Overall:     	

Wiggins in Storyland

Windows \$59.95

Media Vision 47500 Bayside Pkwy., Fremont, CA 94538 Phone: (510) 770-8600



There's a young creative writer in your midst, but you're not quite able to draw him or her out. Why not try *Wiggins in Storyland*, a charming game that lets young people write and illustrate their own books?

With *Wiggins*, kids can compose stories and poems illustrated by more than 40 characters, 110 props, or 40 background tunes (most aren't great, but be sure to try "Ain't No Doggy") all divided into themes such as the circus, outer space, fairy tales, and Westerns. They can even choose among several different fonts to pen their opus, and there are several completed stories already on file for inspiration.

Have they got writer's block? Try a surprise touch by clicking on a jack-in-the-box to watch a herd of dog dishes stampede across the screen or screaming

printed out — and the pictures can be colored with crayons, or saved to disk.

Wiggins begins in the lobby of the tree in which Wiggins, a bright green worm, lives — even this room is animated,



The lobby hints at things to come, with octopus-like plants and instrument-playing ants.

as a shrub grabs a drink from a water cooler and the young writers register their names. From here they take an elevator to write their own stories,

retrieve finished books or works in progress, or visit Wigg's Room.

The latter is an extensively animated room that invites children to explore with their mouse. Activities range from listening to a bust of Shakespeare recite Hamlet's soliloquy to aiming a pea-shooter and from playing instruments to

working five themed mazes. One of the best features is a word mouse who drops by with definitions of funny words — yex, quoz, icker, or (appropriately enough) vermeology.

The biggest problem with *Wiggins* is that it's not sure of its audience. The character and graphics mostly appeal to



On the DISC!

Check out an abbreviated version of the story-writing section from *Wiggins*.

children under ten. But the story-writing program takes a solid vocabulary; knowledge of adjectives, nouns, and verbs; and enough abstract thought to figure out moods and size perspective.

In Wigg's Room, you can pull books from shelves and have Poe's "The Raven" or selections from Whitman, Emerson, Twain, or Carroll read to you (however, you don't find out the work or author until the end — a big mistake). You can also make Wiggins drink fruit juice until he (literally) spews. There's obviously quite an age gap between kids interested in literature and those who like watching a worm vomit.

But if your child is creative and ready to write his or her own stories — or sit with you as you compose one



In Wigg's Room, you can animate almost every object, listen to Shakespeare's bust recite Hamlet's soliloquy, or play a quick game of tic-tac-toe.

together — than it's hard to imagine a better program to spur the imagination than *Wiggins*.

— Leslie Mizell



Wiggins' real strength is its creative writing section, which lets children decide on the setting, characters, props, background music, and other story features.

plants drop from the sky. Or click on the light bulb, and the program suggests ideas for an object over which a magic wand cursor is waved. The stories can be stored in eight different book styles and

Learning Value:	Visuals:
Interface:	Audio:
Overall:	

Lyric Language CDM: French

Mac/Windows \$49.95

Penton Overseas 2470 Impala Dr., Carlsbad, CA 92008-7226 Phone: (800) 748-5804

The world seems smaller every day as distant countries become only a phone call, fax, or e-mail message away. How can kids participate in this global community? Learn another language.

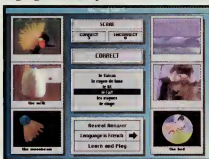
Lyric Language will have your kids spouting French phrases faster than you can say escargot (German and Spanish discs are also available). Music videos, text, and games teach kids French on this disc featuring Family Circus comic characters.

The emphasis here is on repetition. As videos

take kids into real-world situations — the zoo, beach, or supermarket — phrases are repeated in French and English. Kids also get to practice the days of the week, numbers, and the alphabet.

The best learning tools are the games and "Words for Review," where phrases from the videos are identified as parts of speech. The games offer clues in French or English, so beginners can use English clues while more advanced kids can use French clues for the three matching-type games. The fourth game, a typical picture puzzle, seems out of place; kids don't need to use French to solve the puzzles.

The disc fails in one important area: usage. Kids don't learn how to construct a sentence or carry on a conversation in French. The disc only covers the basics — phrases



Words are reviewed in several games, played with French or English clues.



Children learn by watching music videos and following along in the text box.

learned through repetition.

But repetition is the strong point of *Lyric Language*. The music videos will get your kids hooked. The disc may not turn them into fluent French speakers, but it will open their minds and tongues to the global community.

— Lisa M. Howie

Learning Value:	Visuals:
★★★★★	★★★★★
Interface:	Audio:
★★★★★	★★★★★
Overall: ★★★★★	

Sound It Out Land 2

Windows \$49.95

Conexus 5252 Balboa Ave., Suite 605, San Diego, CA 92117 Phone: (619) 268-3358

The second CD-ROM in the Sound It Out Land reading series teaches vowel and consonant blends, as well as sight reading. Like the earlier title (reviewed last issue), *Sound 2* offers four learning areas, each hosted by a talking animal. You can move to any area, but new users should proceed sequentially as each area builds on what was learned previously. The emphasis in the first three areas is on vowel and consonant blends, as well as reading full words. The final activity helps kids put everything together with new words that form sentences.

This volume gets high marks in the sound department. Like the first *Sound*

It Out Land title, the original songs are delightfully arranged and performed, and the narration makes young kids aware of what they should be doing at each stage.



Vowel Owl helps youngsters blend vowels.

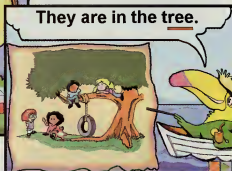
Without the excellent audio, the product would not have nearly as much appeal.

Targeted to 4-6 year olds, *Sound 2* is designed almost identically to the first series title (reviewed last issue), although the interface has been improved. You can now skip forward or backward, hop back to the main interface at any point, skip

the opening animation, or play just the songs or games.

A teacher pack, which includes a teacher's guide and support materials, is also available from Conexus for an additional \$20.00.

— Lance Elko



Toucan Reed hosts the final activity, where kids put words into complete sentences.

Learning Value:	Visuals:
★★★★★	★★★★★
Interface:	Audio:
★★★★★	★★★★★
Overall: ★★★★★	

Alge-Blaster 3

Windows

\$59.95

Davidson & Associates 19840 Pioneer Ave., Torrance
CA 90503 Phone: (310) 793-0600

Though it was one of my favorite subjects, I'll confess that I haven't touched algebra in more years than I care to admit. Words like "polynomial" and "coefficient" aren't part of my daily vocabulary. But *Alge-Blaster 3* started the competitive juices flowing and had

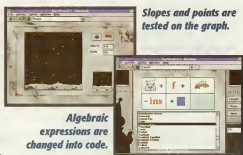


The multi-level interface even allows access to specific problems.

me striving for perfection.

Alge-Blaster 3 is designed for ages 12 and older. Like its almost-identical counterpart on floppy disk, it's divided into four sections, from a straightforward tutorial to an "alien vs. good guy" game. The Challenger section throws up a series of practice problems. Knowledge gained in the Practice Window is transferred to word problems related to spaceships. I found myself reaching for pencil and paper to work out the solutions. It would be fun to have a scratch pad on screen, or access to the video chalkboard. (Hint: Open Windows' Notepad, and switch back and forth.)

Armed with algebraic fundamentals, a player moves forward into the Decoder, Simulator, and Red Alert modes. There are various levels of difficulty, and, for the masochistic, a timer. I chose not to try to beat the clock — outsmarting aliens was enough of a challenge. Just as well, for I ran into trouble in the calculation of slopes, but a quick search in the help file taught me what I needed.



Slopes and points are tested on the graph.

Algebraic expressions are changed into code.

Alge-Blaster 3 is designed to encourage student practice, and it does that very well. For home study, a knowledgeable friend or supporting text is helpful. This program will not explain algebra to a neophyte. However, the interface is straightforward, the graphics neat and amusing, and conquering the aliens will leave players with a lifelong understanding of trajectories.

— Anne Gregor



Scavenger Hunt Adventure Series: Africa

Mac/Windows

\$49.95

SWDe Corp. 2418 MacArthur Blvd., Suite 610,
Newport Beach, CA 92660-5227 Phone: (310) 793-0620

Remember those scavenger hunts when we were kids? Going door to door asking for a blue diaper pin or a Spiderman comic book was such an adventure. Today, thanks to technology, scavenger hunts can take us to exotic Africa.

Vica the crafty vulture is the guide through four African landscapes: a rainforest, savanna, desert, and island. To win, players must find six animals from the Scavenger Hunt List, which provides witty clues, such as "striped stallion" for zebra. Animals also give

clues as they sing, dance, and talk. Players "capture" animals by snapping their photograph. Clicking on Vica provides facts about the animals, including their endangered status.

Africa, for ages 6 and up, is entertaining and educational, with high interactivity, long animation sequences, and whimsical characters. But there are negatives: Travel is limited, so players can't reach those gorgeous mountains off in the distance.

And some sequences are a bit gory; in one scene a lion munches on a zebra.

However, these negatives don't detract from *Africa*'s overall quality. It's a good teaching tool (teacher packs are available for \$69.95), and players learn to

Africa contains 47 animals and 15 plants, so there's minimal repetition and numerous hunts.



Learn about Africa from these description screens, accessible throughout the disc.

experience because there's no specific path to follow. Just explore and enjoy *Africa*, a grand scavenger hunt adventure in a land far from the door-to-door days of our youth.

— Lisa M. Howie



Operation Neptune

The Learning Company 6493 Kaiser Dr., Fremont, CA
94555 Phone: (800) 852-2255 **DOS \$39.95**

If you're looking for a solid educational math program for older kids, put *Operation Neptune* on your list. This learning game arrived on disk in 1992, and promptly won numerous awards. The newly released CD-ROM has added voice and new sound throughout.



Designed for ages 9-14, *Neptune* hones a large variety of math skills, many of which provide good preparation for algebra.

The game challenges the player to operate a mini-sub in a search-and-recover mission that's part arcade game, part math problems. You must navigate through underwater passages and around threatening sea creatures to recover data canisters fallen from a failed space mission. Math problems are

intermittently posed to the player, and correct answers enable progress.

Neptune is a good game/learning combo. The graphics are beginning to look a bit dated, but that's not enough to keep this one from taking a place on your student's educational software shelf.

— L.E.

Spellbound!

The Learning Company 6493 Kaiser Dr., Fremont, CA
94555 Phone: (800) 852-2255 **DOS \$59.95**

For kids age 7-10, *Spellbound!* is an enjoyable game that blends word games with spelling practice. The Learning Company came out with this title out on floppy disk three years ago, when it was one of the first educational programs to offer software-based speech. It was impressive for its clarity, and was well received, particularly by those without sound boards. The speech is, of course, still here on the CD version, and there's more of it.

Spellbound! uses a variety of games



to reinforce the spelling of selected words. The data base of 1000 words can be supplemented by 3000 words of your own. The student "graduates" from one level (classroom) to the next (school) and so on up to the grand finale — the national bee at the White House.

Bottom line: It's a solid learning program.

— L.E.

Berlitz for Business Japanese

Windows/Mac

\$195

Bright Star Technology 40 Lake Bellevue, Suite 350,
Bellevue, WA 98005 Phone: (206) 451-3697

If you're preparing to travel in the land of the rising sun, then *Berlitz for Business Japanese* is the package you'll want. By combining a simple interface with a powerful and concise system of language tutoring, Berlitz has created a title that not only teaches you the basics of this complex tongue, but also provides a good deal of necessary cultural background.

The real power of *Business Japanese* is its devotion to a quick and painless educational interface. Each lesson takes



Lessons put you into situations you'd likely encounter when travelling in Japan.

only a few minutes, a perfect companion for the executive who can only find snatches of time to devote to study. At the end of each group of drills is a test designed to point out weak spots in your Japanese, and then guide you to the exercise that will best address deficient skills.

Although there are no complaints about the value of the tutorial, the rest of the program isn't much to look at. All of the images in the title are for the

most part static, and what animations there are look more like a grade-school science film than a multimedia program. On the other hand, the tutorial's narrative is both clear and articulate, and will certainly help any student down the path to a better understanding of the language.

Overall, while this program doesn't have the flash of an *Encarta*, or the strength of *Power Japanese*, it's perfect for what it was designed as: a quick, easy method of introducing people to the language and culture of Japan. *Berlitz for Business Japanese* will get you up to speed in as short a time as is possible.

— Trent C. Ward

[Ed. note: A Spanish version is due in September.]



RESOURCES

These products may startle you. If you want pleasant pix of waterfalls and baby ducks, keep looking. On the other hand, if you need abstract shots of ominous graveyards, semi-nude pregnant models, and bashed-in TV sets (and who doesn't?...keep reading.



A study in contrasts... at the White House.

Don't get the wrong impression. You will find staggeringly gorgeous scenic photography and intimate portraits of animals and people, and it all looks marvelous. But that's where most photo collections end. Not *Blue Ribbon*, which seems bent and determined to explore the outer limits of imagination and imagery.

Each volume contains 100 Photo CD images that can be used royalty-free. Granted, certain business presentations won't benefit greatly from these collections. (Then again, business aesthetics are loosening up).

Blue Ribbon also scores points for putting its wares (numbered thumbnails of every picture) right on the box. No



An action shot from Volume Two, reminiscent of *Raging Bull*.

The Blue Ribbon Photography Series, Vol. 1 & 2



On the BMSCI

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Windows/Mac \$49.95

Pacific Publishing Group 1030 E. Duane Ave., Ste. D, Sunnyvale, CA 94086 Phone: (408) 732-9291

more buying on faith — what you see is 100% what you get. More photo compilations should be as sure of their contents.

Of course, it's easy to be this up-front when the photographic quality is so uniformly superb. The first set showcases the work of Lee Hinton (who studied with Ansel Adams), while the second volume is devoted to the photography of Claudio Moure (whose career has embraced different means of expression, like multimedia). Both photographers work out of the San Francisco Bay area, and that region's sense of freedom is clearly evi-



Volume One also brings you a little bit of *Boat Hill*.

dent in their work.

How do the two volumes compare to each other? There is perhaps more experimentation in Moure's photography and slightly more standard subject matter in Hinton's work. Other than that distinc-



Even a standard shot from the *Blue Ribbon* series, like this one, makes an dramatic impression.

tion, however, comparisons are largely useless. Each photographer has his own artistic vision, and each is following it to the hilt.

Surrealism is a term often bandied about when other descriptions fail. But when analyzing the *Blue Ribbon* series, overflowing with fantastic images suggesting dream states, surrealism is the only word that fits. Strikingly unconventional and boldly artistic, the first two volumes of The *Blue Ribbon* Photography Series effectively stake out more outre themes. They even manage to squeeze in a few ducks and waterfalls, too.



What is it? Who cares? It's royalty-free!

— Phill Powell

Variety of Content:



Interface:

N/A

Usefulness:



Overall:

WordPerfect Clip Art Premium Collection

Mac/DOS/Windows \$109

WordPerfect Corporation 1555 N. Technology Way,
Orem, UT 84057 Phone: (801) 225-5000

In today's busy world, everyone is looking for new ways to communicate. Mass-produced newsletters have become an easy way for people to stay in touch, and professionally drawn clip art from WordPerfect's new Main Street series *Clip Art Premium Collection* can give your next newsletter some visual punch.

Desktop publishers will be pleased with the more than 4800 high-quality images in 13 categories, ranging from Culture and Cartoons to



This collection has plenty of images to spice up any newsletter.

Business and Government. The collection works with standard graphic formats and includes a

nice Info option, which gives a brief

description along with key words for each image.

Each piece of clip art is displayed as a thumbnail image using the Kudo Image Browser system. It's unfortunate that WordPerfect doesn't provide a reference book or sheet that includes all the images. It would be quicker and easier to find the image that you want.

However, this multiplatform disc will get plenty of use in your small business, home office, or family, although \$109 does seem a bit pricey. With quality artwork, an easy-to-use interface, and thousands of images to choose from, WordPerfect's *Clip Art Premium Collection* is sure to turn your next newsletter into a publishing masterpiece.

— Lisa M. Howie

Variety of Content:

Interface:

Usefulness:

Overall:

Sonic Waves 3000

Windows \$99.99

Innovative Media Corp. 901 S. 6th St., Springfield,
IL 62703 Phone: (217) 544-4614

It's hardly the only Windows sound library available on CD-ROM, but Innovative Media's *Sonic Waves 3000* is certainly one of the most thorough, with over 2800 Wave-format clips on two CD-ROMs. From the sounds of machinery to the sounds of bodily functions, the selections seem well suited for soundtrack effects — "foley" work in the film business — with over 100 automobile sounds and 40 different kinds of footsteps. And

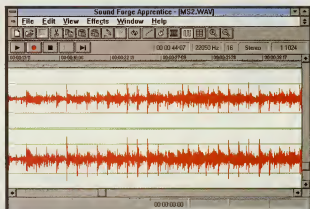
the squeaks, plops, and boings in the "comic effects" collection are perfect for cartoons.

The sounds are sampled at a 22kHz rate rather than 44kHz, so the fidelity isn't quite CD-quality. That's fine most of the time — most sounds don't have enough high-frequency content to need the higher sampling rate — but some of the musical instrument samples have an AM-radio quality, especially the cymbal

and gong sounds. There's a directory of clips in the manual, cataloging them all under 49 topics from "Aircraft" to "Wrestling," but *Sonic Waves* really needs an interactive browser, a way to search for "crowd" and "ambiance" in clip descriptions, for instance, since room-tone sounds are scattered in a dozen different categories.

The license allows royalty-free use of the clips in digital productions as long as IMC gets credit, and the package includes Sound Forge Apprentice, a handy sound-editing program, for trimming clips, adjusting sound, and mixing sounds together into a single soundtrack file. *Sonic Waves 3000* isn't an inexpensive package, but it's a useful production tool for building convincing audio environments.

— Tim Victor



Sonic Waves includes Sound Forge Apprentice, a useful sound-editing program.

Variety of Content:

Interface:

Usefulness:

Overall:

Fotopro's Closeups I, Landscapes I, Waterscenes I

Mac/DOS/Windows \$49.95

SKV International 37200 Central Ct., Newark,
CA 94560 Phone: (510) 796-1101

CD-ROMs containing royalty-free images are now becoming a dime a dozen, and these three Fotopro discs don't stand out from the crowd.

Each disc holds 100 Photo CD images, each available in five display

choices, ranging from 192 x 128 to 3072 x 2048. There's a useful slideshow



Fotopro's images are standard fare for CD photo collections.

option, where the user gets a 2-3 second look at each photo, and numbered

thumbnails are printed on the jewel case insert. These features are nice touches to otherwise mediocre package.

The discs don't contain anything out of the ordi-



nary; we've got mountains, waterfalls, flowers, and more mountains. There are some beaches and close-ups of different textures, but not enough.

Some fall color or exotic locale shots on *Landscapes I* and *Waterscenes I* would have been nice, and *Close-Ups I* could have been more experimental. But these discs just don't do much to distinguish themselves from the rest of the pack.

— Lisa M. Howie



Variety of Content:



Interface:



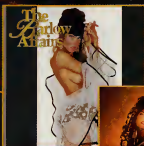
Usefulness:



Overall:

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Charisma 4.0

Windows \$495.00

Micrografix 1303 E. Arapaho, Richardson, TX 75081 Phone: (214) 234-1769

For Micrografix to offer its Windows presentation-graphics program as a fairly pricey stand-alone package, it had better be something special. For the past couple of years, suites like *Microsoft Office* and *Lotus SmartSuite* have become the hot product concept for the Windows market. The popular suites include presentation-graphics programs, so a large portion of business PC users either have presentation software already or expect to get it as part of their next upgrade.

Micrografix must be convinced that *Charisma 4.0* is exceptional in order to sell it as an unbound program, or to charge extra (\$149.95) for the competi-

Presentation-graphics programs were originally designed to create figures, diagrams, and formatted text for overhead transparencies and slides, but many presenters now choose to project their presentations directly from a PC's display. Besides avoiding the expensive and time-consuming process of creating hard-copy output, this approach opens the door for more exciting presentations that include animated slide transitions, synchronized

ness presentations far more effective, or even for building fairly sophisticated kiosk-type productions. You can attach a hyperlink to any object on the screen to trigger a jump to another slide in the presentation, play a multimedia clip, or launch another program when it's clicked.

One of *Charisma*'s strongest fea-



A slide created with the default style has only a title, but it's easy to change that by applying a different template to the slide.

tive upgrade from Microsoft's *PowerPoint* or Lotus' *Freelance Graphics*. So how good is it? *Charisma* more than measures up to the competition. It offers everything you'd expect from a fully loaded business-graphics program, including charting and graphing, bullet-listed text, and outline editing, and it adds powerful illustration, multimedia, and interactive control features that put it a notch above its competitors.



The Template item in the Styles menu chooses a new template for the current slide, in this case one with both body text and a picture.

audio, and the full range of PC multimedia. *Charisma*'s real-time presentation features are the best in its class, with 52 different transition effects and full support for sound, music, animation and video built in. Multimedia playback can be precisely controlled by selecting part of a media clip, looping it indefinitely or some fixed number of times, fading sounds in and out, and independently controlling each sound's volume.

Charisma is designed as a presentation-graphics program, not a multimedia authoring system, but its strong interactive features are useful for making busi-

ness presentations far more effective, or even for building fairly sophisticated kiosk-type productions. You can attach a hyperlink to any object on the screen to trigger a jump to another slide in the presentation, play a multimedia clip, or launch another program when it's clicked. One of *Charisma*'s strongest features is the tremendous degree of control it offers over a presentation's style. Every presentation carries a master style: a collection of color schemes, text schemes, backgrounds, and slide templates that controls every aspect of a slide's appearance. A new slide begins with the default background, colors, and text style specified in the master style, and with a template, chosen to suit the slide's content. *Charisma*'s pre-designed master styles each contain 11 templates, including layouts for slides with text, one or two charts, and text plus a chart, movie, or picture. Placeholder within the template automatically set the size, position, and alignment of each element as it's dropped into the placeholder's

dotted outline.

It's just as easy to go back and change a slide's appearance by applying a new text style, color, or background. To change the style of several slides, you can edit a style element like a template or a color or text scheme, changing the look of every slide that uses that scheme, or you can update the look of an entire presentation by applying a new master style.

It takes a while to get used to Charisma's tightly structured way of creating presentations. But once you've gotten the hang of it, and you've found or created master styles

hand curves, and it offers a rich selection of fill and line styles, plus effects that include warping, extrusions, and object blending. The three-dimensional drawing and charting functions are unique among presentation programs,

Double-clicking the Picture placeholder pops up Charisma's media manager to select a picture.



Dotted outlines indicate placeholders for the template's content.

that suit you, Charisma can crank out sophisticated presentations with amazing speed. The smooth, well-designed user interface helps a lot, too. There's a hint line at the bottom of the window to show a description of each button or menu item that passes under the mouse pointer, along with context-sensitive help and intelligent right-button functions that make for smooth operation.

Charisma offers exceptional drawing and image-editing features, on par with many dedicated illustration programs. It handles all standard drawing primitives like lines, rectangles, ellipses, and free-

hand curves, and it offers a rich selection of fill and line styles, plus effects that include warping, extrusions, and object blending. The three-dimensional drawing and charting functions are unique among presentation programs,

and they offer total control over each object's shading style and the light source. For displaying numerical data, ten different types of charts are available, and numbers can be imported directly from most spreadsheets.

The integrated media manager is a unique feature of Charisma 4.0, presenting thumbnail images and clip previews, maintaining multiple media catalogs, and doing keyword searches for clips within a catalog. Charisma imports a wide range of media, including most popular formats of bitmap images, plus CorelDraw, Micrografx Designer, and Adobe Illustrator drawings. It comes with a CD-ROM that's packed with images, sounds, movies, and fonts, and it can even operate a TWAIN-compatible scanner to capture images off paper.

Its multimedia capabilities are exceptional, but Charisma also excels at

creating hard-copy output. It includes first-class support for handouts and speaker's notes, sophisticated text-formatting, and even a spelling checker. With the ability to optimize its output for black-and-white printing or CMYK color separations, Charisma does just as good a job with printed output as it does with projected video displays.

The biggest downside to Charisma 4.0 is a hidden cost that it carries: its heavy-duty system requirements. It's a very large, feature-laden application, and even the minimum installation takes up 12 megs of hard-drive space. Only a fast 486 or Pentium CPU is up to the task of running Charisma 4.0, and only the most patient user will enjoy its performance with the recommended minimum 8MB of RAM.

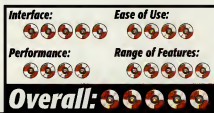
Despite its powerful multimedia, illustration, and desktop-publishing features, Charisma 4.0 has both feet firmly planted in the presentation-graphics software camp.



When a picture is selected, Charisma automatically rescales it to fit the template's placeholder.

There are better programs for other tasks, and simpler presentation programs will be good enough for many business users. But if you're serious about making the best possible business presentations under Windows, you're wasting your time with anything less.

— Tim Victor



Q/Media 2.0

Windows \$199

Q/Media 312 E. Fifth Ave., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V5T 1H4 Phone: (800) 444-9356

Here's a smooth, easy-to-use multimedia presentation program for Windows, combining a clean user interface with solid interactive controls and



On the DISC!

A limited working version plus hands-on tutorial.

support for a wide range of media types. Its low cost and painless interface will appeal to multimedia hobbyists, and also

synchronized multimedia movies, but, like traditional movies, the presentations looked the same every time they played. The most important new feature in Q/Media 2.0 is the addition of interactive control. Every object appearing on screen can have a link property, which determines what should happen if that object is clicked. Link actions can include jumping to another scene and frame within the presentation, displaying a message in a dialog box, playing another

them onto the stage within a scene.

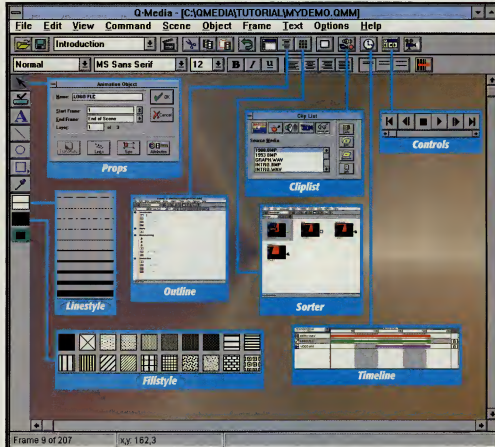
Q/Media's approach to multimedia presentations uses a cinematic metaphor, with scenes and frames making up a presentation and objects on a stage making up its content. You can also quickly add scenes by entering text in Q/Media's outline view, shuffle scenes in the scene-sorter view, and pop up the timeline window to precisely control the timing of each object's entry and exit.

Q/Media 2.0 supports an impressive range of media and file types, including GIF, TIFF, JPEG, and Photo CD pictures, several vector graphics formats from drawing programs, and most popular audio, animation, and digital video formats.

Support for Windows' OLE 2.0 gives Q/Media the ability to tightly integrate files from other OLE 2.0 applications. It can insert charts, figures, and other art from programs like Microsoft Word, Excel, and Corel Draw into presentation scenes, with in-place editing and playback. OLE 2.0 makes some very sophisticated presentations possible, seamlessly combining elements from several applications in a single movie. But while Q/Media's hardware requirements are very modest, you'll need significantly more disk space, RAM, and computing power to run several large OLE server applications together.

All-in-all, Q/Media 2.0 is a very capable program that should appeal to a wide range of Windows users, and the DigiClips media library on CD-ROM is an attractive bonus, with 500MB of video and animation clips, background bitmaps, sound effects, and music. Q/Media probably won't become the tool of choice for professional developers, but it's a solid value among mainstream multimedia integration programs.

— Tim Victor



to some educators and business users who don't need all the features of a professional authoring system or a complete presentation-graphics package.

Version 1.2 of Q/Media did a respectable job of combining clips into

er media clip, or activating an OLE (Object Linking and Embedding) object within the scene.

Most of the work in creating a movie involves dragging media clips from Q/Media's clip list window and dropping

Interface:	Ease of Use:
Performance:	Range of Features:
Overall:	

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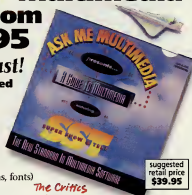
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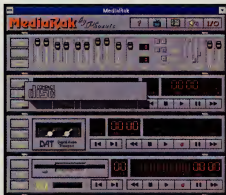
CD Essentials, distributed on two 3.5-inch floppies, is a Windows utility that limits the countless small steps required to run CD-ROMs. Aside from accelerating installations and boot-up processes, CD Essentials has other tricks in its bag.

The main interface is styled like an oversized remote controller. When a disc is loaded, CD Essentials scans it and signals which media formats (e.g., video, photos, animations, CD audio, Wave files, and MIDI files) are found on it. Then you can enter content descriptions



This sleek interface is the gateway to CD Essentials.

into a database, in essence archiving title info. However, if you'd rather bypass the recordkeeping, you can either jumpstart the disc or travel to the multi-



Eject a disc and the MediaRak CD player opens its drawer, too.

media player, MediaRak.

The MediaRak, CD Essentials' other main component, is cleverly modeled after an audio rack system. From here you manipulate the various media formats indicated by the remote controller. It's part light-table, CD player, movie projector, and mixing console.

The MediaRak is especially sharp and impressive. Although I doubt many people are going to spend the time to enter database descriptions of every CD-ROM they use, there's much utility to be found in CD Essentials.

— P.P.

The Writing Center

The Learning Company 6493 Kaiser Dr., Fremont,
CA 94555 Phone: (800) 852-2255 **Mac \$79.95**

Doing reports or creating newsletters is easy and fun with *The Writing Center*, a publishing program for all ages. The layout and word processing features are simple to learn, and anyone who has experience with a Mac should catch on in no time. More than 400 color and black-and-white images are available in several categories, including Nature, Community, Science, and Social Studies. The Endangered category with its pictures of dinosaurs is sure to be a hit with kids.

The program has many nice options, including the ability to import pictures as black-and-white images and preview them before printing. There are templates for memos, certificates, stationery, invitations, and birthday cards. *The Writing Center* can be a valuable asset when creating documents for school, work, or just for fun.

— L.H.



Writing Center users choose from a newsletter, report, or custom layout.

Student Writing Center

The Learning Company 6493 Kaiser Dr., Fremont,
CA 94555 (800) 852-2255 **Windows \$79.95**

When this Windows-based word processor debuted last year on floppy disk, it was received with critical acclaim (by this writer, too). I really can't say enough good things about *Student Writing Center* — my own children use it regularly for school assignments, and it offers an unbeatable combination of ele-



Student Writing Center offers kids an easy way to dress up their documents, and provides plenty of grammar tips.

gance and utility. It includes preformatted documents for reports, newsletters,

journals, letters, and signs, and it features writers' aids, such as grammar tips and a bibliography maker. Now it's on CD-ROM. The major enhancement is the inclusion of 400 images which can be dropped anywhere into documents (the disk version had 150).

Targeted to ages 10 and up, *Student Writing Center* is easy-to-use, intuitive, and offers plenty of options that students can use; but while there's plenty of power, it's never overwhelming. For those with youngsters at home or in the classroom, this package comes very highly recommended.

— L.E.

Multimedia Cloaking

DOS/Windows \$39.95

Media Vision 47300 Bayside Pkwy., Fremont, CA 94538 Phone: (800) 684-6699

You've probably seen the Romulan cloaking technology (also used by the Klingons) on "Star Trek." A huge starship, once solid, begins to shimmer, waver, then fades to the blackness of space, leaving only stars — invisible even to enemy sensors. Like the cloaking of a Romulan warbird, Helix's advanced software technology seems like magic: Memory-hungry software drivers, namely, your CD-ROM driver, mouse driver, and CD-ROM/disk are hidden in memory, yet fully functional. Now you can

MEMMAKER, or successfully Double-spaced your hard drive — and survived to tell the tale — you may be ready for the next generation: cloaked drivers.

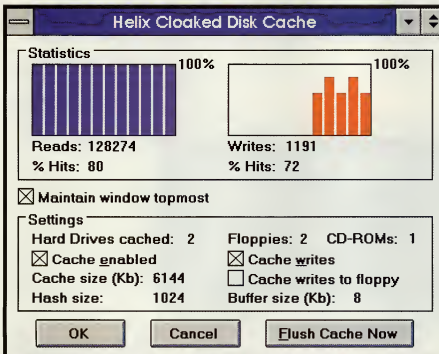
Multimedia Cloaking (on floppy disk, not CD-ROM) replaces MSCDEX.EXE, MOUSE.EXE, and SMARTDRV.EXE (Microsoft's disk cache) with its own software that uses only a few K of conventional RAM, and doesn't use any upper memory either. The result is freer DOS RAM, a cherished prize no matter how much total

puter runs faster, too. How is this possible? Cloaking hides the drivers by putting them in Extended Memory (the RAM beyond your first 1MB), which is memory normally unavailable to DOS. Extended memory also runs faster and more reliably, since it's accessed via the 32-bit protected mode of the 386, 486, or Pentium processor (required).

The cache keeps track of the most recent disk and CD-ROM activity, storing it in the cache buffer, so that when your program needs the data again, it can retrieve it from the cache rather than searching the drive again. With at least 2MB for the cache buffer, you can considerably speed up your hard drive and CD-ROM access. For example, the *Multimedia Cloaking* cache started *CorelDraw* from CD-ROM nearly twice as fast as Smartdrive allowed, and hard-drive access was slightly faster, on par with the new 32-bit file access permitted by Windows for Workgroups 3.11.

The setup program promises ease of installation, and tries to remove your old drivers, but it doesn't always get it right — so follow up and check your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files. It's a good idea to install and test only one cloaked driver at a time, too. And for best results, you'll want to rerun MEMMAKER if you have DOS 6.x. But if you like to optimize your computer for speed and memory, *Multimedia Cloaking* is irresistible.

— Charles Brannon



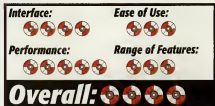
While not a project for DOS novices, *Multimedia Cloaking* can make a huge difference in your system's performance.

attack your DOS games and fire up Windows armed with plenty of free RAM, poised at the helm of a warp-speed starship...er...computer.

Although Helix tries to make the installation easy for novices, this is not a project for those who are still struggling to make sense out of DOS. If you've installed a DOS upgrade, made sense of

RAM you have. Even if you currently load these drivers high, cloaking them frees upper-memory blocks for Windows, or for other TSRs and drivers. (You do have to use EMM386 or another expanded memory manager: Helix recommends its own NETROOM utility for best speed.)

On one of my computers, I saved a whopping 206 megabytes. And my com-



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The Next Step in CD-ROM Interfaces



It seems that nothing about computers is simple. And when something threatens to "get" simple, the computer industry

almost invariably finds a way to make it

more complicated. Take the example of CD-ROM interfaces. An interface is what connects a device such as a CD-ROM drive to a computer, and for a while it seemed that the standard for CD-ROM would be SCSI (Small Computer System Interface). SCSI has several advantages: It's fast; it's versatile; a single interface supports as many as eight devices; and you can easily add new devices by linking them to the "daisy chain" of existing peripherals.

Apple pioneered the SCSI standard, building SCSI ports into all Macintoshes since the introduction of the Mac Plus in 1986. This jump-started the market for SCSI products and helped the Mac gain its reputation for being easy to set up and use. Within a few years, the Mac spawned a thriving market in SCSI hard drives, scanners, and CD-ROMs.

If PC compatibles had universally adopted SCSI, life would be a little simpler today. Instead, many PC vendors took their own proprietary approaches, and now there are at least a dozen variations of CD-ROM interfaces for PCs — all incompatible with each other and with SCSI. Some PC vendors did embrace SCSI, but minor differences in their implementations have led to major frustrations for users. And SCSI ports still aren't built into the vast majority of PCs, so many users have to install their own SCSI interface boards and deal with all the problems that entails.

However, about nine out of ten PCs do have another standard device interface: IDE (Integrated Device Electronics). IDE, usually integrated on the motherboard, connects to the internal hard drive. Although the existing IDE interface has a few limitations compared to SCSI — including a ceiling of 528 MB per drive — an enhanced version will begin appearing in

new computers and interface cards this summer or fall. In addition to supporting faster and higher-capacity hard drives, enhanced IDE will also work with CD-ROMs, eliminating the need for SCSI or proprietary interfaces.

In the short run, this could cause still more confusion for PC users. If you're buying a new CD-ROM drive, you'll have to understand whether it requires SCSI, IDE, or a proprietary interface. Because the IDE interfaces on existing motherboards generally aren't upgradable, you'll either have to buy a new computer to get enhanced IDE or plug a new IDE interface card into an expansion slot. People who move CD-ROM drives between PCs and Macintoshes — easy to do with SCSI — will discover that IDE devices won't work on Macs. (Although Apple is rumored to be considering enhanced IDE for its future machines, too.)

Long-term, the industry hopes that enhanced IDE will make it cheaper to build CD-ROMs into PCs at the factory. That way, fewer users will have to wrestle with the complexities of interface standards and installation in the first place.

This trend is already well under way. The number of computers sold with built-in CD-ROM drives grew from 30 percent

of the market in 1993 to about 50 percent this year, with 70 percent expected by 1995, according to Don Bryson, vice president of Oak Technology (Sunnyvale, CA). Oak recently introduced the first enhanced IDE controller for CD-ROMs.

"In the future, all personal computers will come with CD-ROM drives as a standard feature, just like

floppy drives today," says Bryson. "The average person won't even know their CD-ROM drive is hooked up to an IDE interface, just like right now most people don't know their hard drive is hooked up to IDE."

Enhanced IDE won't make a CD-ROM drive run faster than a comparable SCSI-based drive, because neither interface is a bottleneck for the relatively slow CD-ROMs. But if enhanced IDE eventually makes CD-ROM simpler and more affordable, that'll be good enough.



If all PCs used SCSI, life would be simpler — instead, there are at least a dozen variations of CD-ROM interfaces for PCs. But a new alternative could change the picture.

Tom Halfhill has been writing about the computer industry since 1981. A former editor of *Compute Magazine*, he is currently senior editor for the West Coast Bureau of *Byte Magazine*. Email: THALFHILL@BIX.COM.

WING COMMANDER™

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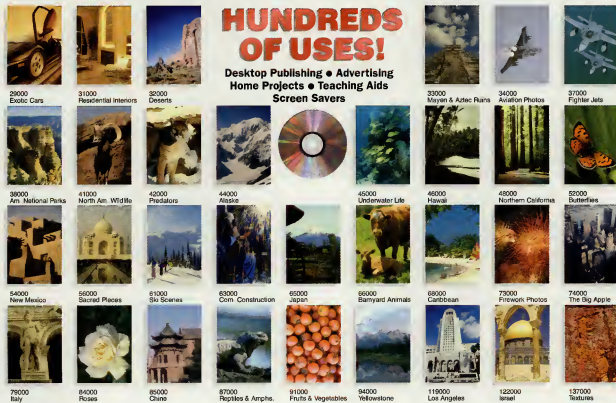
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